

Malaysian Airline delegation arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — The chairman of the board of directors of the Malaysian Airlines, Tajuddin Ramli, arrived here Tuesday heading a delegation on a three-day visit to Jordan for talks with Royal Jordanian (RJ) officials. In an arrival statement, Mr. Ramli said he would discuss with RJ officials means of enhancing cooperation in the fields of aviation, air transport of passengers and goods. RJ Director General and Chief Executive Officer, Nader Al Dahabi, noted that RJ has two regular weekly flights to Malaysia in accordance with an agreement signed by both countries in 1985. He said the RJ was trying to reach an agreement with Malaysia to increase the number of weekly flight to three. The Malaysian delegation was received upon arrival by Finance Minister and Chairman of the RJ Board of Directors Basil Jardaneh, Mr. Dahabi and the Consul of Malaysia in Amman Abdul Hay Al Majali in addition to senior RJ officials.

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Morocco murder trial adjourned

FEZ (AFP) — The trial of 18 people accused in an attack on a Moroccan hotel last August that left two people dead was adjourned for eight days Monday to give defence attorneys more time to prepare. Hours after the proceedings got under way, the five-judge court agreed to a motion by attorneys for some of 11 alleged accomplices in the attack to postpone the trial until Jan. 18. The prosecution did not object. The seven main defendants are accused of carrying out an attack that Moroccan officials say was part of a plot by militant organisations bent on destabilising the Moroccan government. Morocco also said the attack was masterminded mainly by Algerians inside and outside Algeria. The seven main defendants face the death penalty if convicted. Three of the seven main defendants have dual Franco-Algerian or Franco-Moroccan nationality. Stephane Ait Iddir, 22, a Franco-Algerian and Redouane Hammadi, 26, a Franco-Moroccan, both from a Paris suburb, are alleged to have carried out the Aug. 24 attack on the Atlas-Asni Hotel in Marrakesh with the aid of Tarik Falah, a Franco-Moroccan now in jail in Germany.

Israel-PLO talks in 'crisis' over settlement expansion Rabin says no withdrawal to 1967 lines

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Tuesday that Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) talks were in crisis and that Jewish settlement building jeopardised the entire Middle East peace process. "It has not reached the ultimate crisis yet but it is a crisis situation," Mr. Musa said, after attending talks between PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. "Settlement policy is a very serious policy, a very serious affair that would affect the whole process of peace and would affect the future, not only of the Palestinian, but all the process of peace," he said. "The issue of the expansion of existing settlements remains the gap dividing us," Mr. Musa said.

PLO seeks U.S. help

THE Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has asked the United States to put pressure on Israel to halt the expansion of Jewish settlements, Palestinian lead negotiator Nabil Shaath said here Tuesday. He was speaking after another round of Israeli-Palestinian talks to extend Palestinian self-rule on the West Bank ended without agreement. "We have asked the U.S. consul in Jerusalem for his country to call on Israel to halt all forms of settlement to safeguard the peace process," Mr. Shaath said. "The issue of the expansion of existing settlements remains the gap dividing us," Mr. Musa said.

he said. In Paris, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres denied that there was any "crisis" in Israeli-Palestinian talks on autonomy, saying he was confident that a settlement could be reached. Asked about comments by his Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa during the day, when he said that autonomy negotiations were going through a crisis, Mr. Peres said talks would continue for two or three months. "There is no crisis at all. We began the second round of negotiations between us and the Palestinians. Yesterday I spoke with Yasser Arafat and I believe that we can continue these discussions," he said.

told the upper house of the Egyptian parliament, in remarks quoted by Al Ahram newspaper. Mr. Musa was due to hold further talks with Mr. Arafat late Tuesday, before the PLO leader returns to the autonomous Gaza Strip on Wednesday. The foreign minister said earlier that a meeting between Mr. Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres Monday at the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza had been good. But he said the same issues would be raised again when Mr. Arafat met Mr. Rabin, which he said would be a "very important meeting." Israeli radio said the meeting would take place on Jan. 19. Israel and the PLO ended another round of negotiations Tuesday failing to agree on arrangements for organising Palestinian elections to a self-rule council. "So far there is no agreement on any of the issues. It's time to start jointly drawing up a summary of the points of disagreement on elections," the head of the Palestinian team, Saeb Erakat, said. He said the major disagreements were over the eligibility of Palestinians living in Arab East Jerusalem, the size of the new autonomy council and the supervision of the elections. "The Israelis are still refusing to create a 'fait accompli' at Elkana and elsewhere in (the West Bank) and we will not allow Palestinian troublemakers to prevent us from asserting our presence," he said. The settlers erected barbed wire around the land, which includes olive groves, and used two bulldozers to break the ground ready for construction. According to Mr. Smiliansky, the nine hectares are "government land" and are part of the Elkana municipal area, where 3,000 Israelis live. "If the inhabitants of the surrounding Arab villages come to disturb us we will know how to greet them," threatened Mr. Smiliansky, who is also security chief for the West Bank and Gaza councils. The move came a week after clashes erupted at the settlement of Ephrat, south of Bethlehem, when settlers tried to expand the colony to encompass a nearby hill-top. The army intervened and the government banned the development, but allowed the settlers to take over another site close by. Hundreds of Palestinians have demonstrated against the expansion of settlements in recent days. Meanwhile, troops used force overnight to stop the



Jewish settlers from the West Bank settlement of Elkana pull out barbed wire as they fence off an area of approximately 1.5 kilometres from the nearest houses in Elkana (AFP photo)

Settlers fence off Palestinian farmland; protesters tear-gassed

ELKANAH, occupied West Bank (Agencies) — Police tear-gassed dozens of Palestinian protesters as Israeli settlers fenced off land farmed by Palestinians on the occupied West Bank on Tuesday, witnesses said. Dozens of Palestinians demonstrated as some 300 settlers gathered to support the provocative move on a hill-top beside the colony of Elkana, just 20 kilometres from Tel Aviv. "People from the neighbouring village of Zawayah tried to halt the work but the soldiers blocked them," said Chawki Issa, spokesman for the Palestinian Land and Water Committee which resists land expropriations. "Some people were arrested and the army fired teargas," he said. Israeli Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni called for a "total halt" to the work which she warned jeopardised the peace process with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Police blocked the protesters as they marched down a road towards the fields. The army said it had given approval for a gathering of some 300 settlers which took place peacefully. Elkana "mayor" Nissan Smiliansky said: "We are

going to create a 'fait accompli' at Elkana and elsewhere in (the West Bank) and we will not allow Palestinian troublemakers to prevent us from asserting our presence," he said. The settlers erected barbed wire around the land, which includes olive groves, and used two bulldozers to break the ground ready for construction. According to Mr. Smiliansky, the nine hectares are "government land" and are part of the Elkana municipal area, where 3,000 Israelis live. "If the inhabitants of the surrounding Arab villages come to disturb us we will know how to greet them," threatened Mr. Smiliansky, who is also security chief for the West Bank and Gaza councils. The move came a week after clashes erupted at the settlement of Ephrat, south of Bethlehem, when settlers tried to expand the colony to encompass a nearby hill-top. The army intervened and the government banned the development, but allowed the settlers to take over another site close by. Hundreds of Palestinians have demonstrated against the expansion of settlements in recent days. Meanwhile, troops used force overnight to stop the

founding of a new illegal settlement near the West Bank town of Ramallah, military officials said. Several hundred settlers forced their way past a military road block and parked a caravan near Halamsah settlement where a young Israeli woman was shot dead Friday by Palestinians. The army said it confronted hundreds of settlers before dawn, pushing aside a mobile home they tried to illegally place at the site about 12 kilometres northwest of Ramallah. It said 14 settlers were detained before order was restored. Israel radio said only one remained in custody hours later. Settlers, angry at the drive-by killing on Friday, accused Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government of giving in to Palestinian demands to turn over what they refer to as the "land of Israel."

Hundreds of residents of nearby Jewish settlements gathered at the site before 3 a.m. They brought in a mobile home on a truck and dozens of settlers began singing. "A few dozen settlers who did not agree to evacuate and upset traffic on the main road were evacuated," an army statement said.

King to visit Qatar

By Caroline Farraj
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein is expected to visit Qatar "soon" for talks with the Qatari emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Al Thani, on Jordanian-Qatari ties and inter-Arab relations, diplomatic sources said Tuesday. During the visit, the King will discuss with Sheikh Hamad the state of disarray in Arab ranks and means to restore Arab unity and solidarity, the diplomatic sources told the Jordan Times and Al Ra'i on condition of anonymity. Jordanian-Qatari ties have improved dramatically after the strain caused by the 1990 Gulf crisis. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan visited Doha and the Qatari foreign minister paid a visit to Amman last year.

Arafat expected here

Sources also said Tuesday that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was expected in Amman in the next few days. "The exact date for (Mr. Arafat's) visit to Jordan is not clear yet, but it would be soon," said one source. The focus of talks between the King and Mr. Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and chairman of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in autonomous Gaza and Jericho, is expected to be Jordanian-Palestinian political and economic relations. The two leaders also are expected to review the course of the Middle East peace process. Mr. Arafat visited Jordan shortly before he entered the Gaza Strip in July after ending several decades of exile and headed the PNA. Reports since then have often said he was planning to visit Jordan, but Jordanian insistence that a visit for the sake of visiting was not enough and that the PLO leader should be prepared to discuss and finalise substantive issues appeared to have delayed the trip.

Faithful flock to graceland

MEMPHIS, Tennessee (AP) — "It's an Elvis thing," Dawn Smith said as she placed a bouquet of flowers on the grave of Elvis Presley. She was one of thousands of fans who gathered for a three-day Elvis memorial service in Memphis. Smith, who came from Chicago, said she had never met Elvis but she agreed that he was a special man. She said she had heard that he was a good person and that he was a great singer. She said she was going to stay in Memphis for the three days to pay tribute to him. She said she was going to stay in Memphis for the three days to pay tribute to him.

Premier receives congratulations

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker on Tuesday received congratulations from His Majesty King Hussein's advisors, former prime ministers, director of the General Intelligence Department and senior intelligence officers, senior civil and military officials, tribal chiefs and representatives of the professional and trade unions, parties' leaders, heads of the women's federation and voluntary societies, heads of Arab and foreign diplomatic missions in Jordan and representatives of peoples from all walks of life.

Kebir 'will not be Algerian Khomeini'

AMMAN (AFP) — The German government will see to it that Rabah Kebir, head of the external leadership of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), does not become a "second Khomeini," the head of the domestic intelligence service said Tuesday. Eckhart Werthebach, speaking on the German television news channel NTV, was referring to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who built up a following while in exile in Europe before taking power in the Islamic revolution which overthrew the Shah of Iran in 1979. Mr. Kebir, who is living in Germany where he has requested political asylum, chairs the FIS executive abroad and acts as its spokesman, to the embarrassment of the German authorities.

Reagan's health decline 'fast'

NEW YORK (AFP) — The Alzheimer's disease affecting former President Ronald Reagan has advanced rapidly to the stage where he is unable to recognise old friends and is sometimes confused, according to his biographer, Edmund Morris, who has been working on Mr. Reagan's biography, wrote the 84-year-old former president referred to his papers as "trees" and seemed mystified by a reference to his suffering from pneumonia as a child.



A wounded Chechen fighter is carried away after he was hit by shrapnel in central Grozny (AFP photo)

Chechens marshal forces during 48-hour 'ceasefire'

GROZNY (Agencies) — Chechen fighters reinforced their positions in their battered capital Grozny and Russian troops launched new attacks on city centre targets on Tuesday, making nonsense of a ceasefire called by Moscow. Chechen separatists used a lull following the official start of the 48-hour truce on Tuesday morning to pour men and arms into front-line positions, and showed no signs of heeding the Kremlin's appeal to down arms. Reporters who cross the Suez River bridge on foot saw Russian mortar bombs, artillery shells and rocket-propelled grenades landing in Freedom Square in front of separatist President Dzhokhar Dudayev's shell-blackened palace. Spurts of heavy fighting broke out north of the square in an area where the Chechens face Russian tanks and infantry. Hundreds of civilians, trapped by more than a month of ferocious street fighting, took advantage of the respite to flee the capital, lugging suitcases and bedding. "Both sides are resting now and soon there will be

heavy fighting again," said 29-year-old Musa, a Chechen fighter helping his mother to evacuate her apartment. "The Russians will have to destroy Grozny to beat us. We are killing so many of them. They want to go home. We have taken many prisoners," he said. Within hours of the truce coming into effect at 8 a.m. (0500 GMT), Russia's military command said its soldiers had suspended hostilities but accused the rebels of continuing to shoot. Russia's human rights commissioner, Sergei Kovalev, returning to Grozny after a brief stay in Moscow, denounced the terms of the ceasefire. He said Moscow's statements amounted to no more than new ultimatums to Chechens to lay down their arms. The Kremlin, which sent troops into the region on Dec. 11 to crush its drive for independence, called the ceasefire after several days of fierce artillery and mortar attacks on the presidential building in Grozny to break Chechen resistance. A government statement issued overnight said the proposed two-day truce

sought to "halt the bloodshed and again attempt to resolve the Chechen conflict by peaceful means." Another statement called on the Chechens "to leave their positions and armour, lay down their weapons and free all people seized in hostilities." Both sides blamed each other for breaking the ceasefire. The head of the general staff of Chechen separatist forces, Aslan Maskhadov, said in an interview with AFP inside the besieged palace that the ceasefire was not acceptable to the Chechens. The ceasefire was a "trick" which had been quickly violated by the Russian military, an attempt by Moscow to avoid a bloodbath for its troops by getting the Chechens to surrender, he added. But the Russian government press service said that the Chechen defenders of Grozny had used mortars and rockets soon after the ceasefire started, and that Russian units were forced to respond after 10:00 a.m. (0700 GMT). In Moscow, Prime Minister

Algerian opposition drafts peace plan

ROME (Agencies) — Leaders from Algeria's legal and illegal opposition meeting in Rome said Tuesday they had nearly finished a joint statement for Algeria's military regime to propose opening talks and "returning democracy" to the country. The meeting, sponsored by a Catholic church group, aims at ending a civil war that has claimed more than 10,000 lives in two years. But Algiers has denounced the initiative as outside "interference" and declined to send a delegation. "Tomorrow we shall finish work on a platform that will link all political parties present here towards opening talks" with the military-backed regime, said former Algerian President Ahmad Ben Bella who heads the Algerian Democratic Movement. "If the power (in Algiers) does not respond to our offer for a dialogue we will carry on anyway among ourselves," said Hocine Ait Ahmed, head of the moderate Socialist Forces Front (FFS). They were among six of the delegates who spoke at a press conference, including a delegate from the key outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), U.S.-based Anwar Haddam. Mr. Haddam, saying he spoke for the FIS leadership, said "there is hope" to "try to find a political solution to the crisis" in Algeria. Mr. Haddam told the news

conference: "This document will truly answer the main questions of the Algerian crisis and provides hope for its solution." Western intelligence services estimate that between 20,000 and 30,000 Algerians have been killed in civil strife since the cancellation in January 1992 of general elections which the FIS was poised to win. Mr. Haddam said the FIS "firmly supports the armed struggle for a just cause, though the armed struggle is not an end in itself, but a means" to re-establish democratic order in Algeria. He stressed his party "makes a clear distinction between the terrorism we have always condemned and the armed struggle" for a democratic end. The FIS delegate also "rejoiced" that "some people in France are breaking their silence" and refusing to support the regime of Algerian President Liamine Zerroul. He gave no names, however. The FIS has assailed France, the former colonial power, for its military and economic support of the Algerians regime. The other three delegates were: Abdul Nour Ali Yahya, a lawyer and head of the Algerian Human Rights League, Abdul Al Hamid Mehri, general secretary of the former ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), and Louisa Hannoun, spokeswoman for the Algerian Workers Party.

U.S.: Iraq retains Kuwaiti equipment

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The United States circulated data and photographs among Security Council members on Tuesday which it said showed Iraq still retained some 9,000 pieces of military equipment, plus thousands of civilian items, taken from Kuwait during the Gulf war. The equipment included missile launchers and armoured personnel carriers used by Iraq in a military build-up which threatened Kuwait last October, U.S. spokesman James Rubin told reporters. American Ambassador Madeleine Albright displayed the evidence, including satellite photographs, as the Security Council was about to conduct a periodic review of sanctions imposed on Baghdad following its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Mr. Rubin said Iraq's failure to return the Kuwaiti equipment, as required by council resolutions, raised serious questions about its credibility and peaceful intentions, which the council must take into account in conducting its review of sanctions. These include a ban on Iraqi oil exports. At the time of the last such review in mid-November, Ms. Albright produced satellite photographs said to show that Iraq was spending at least half a billion dollars on what she said were "literally dozens of opulent new palaces" for the use of President Saddam Hussein and his

family, even though he complained that sanctions were causing Iraqis great personal hardship. Diplomats say they expected the Security Council to retain the embargo while extending suspension of sanctions originally imposed on Belgrade for helping Bosnian Serbs. Iraqi Vice-Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, who is in New York to plead his country's cause, arrived Sunday in a slightly stronger position since France decided to open an interest section in the Romanian embassy in Baghdad. Some countries, including Kuwait, have argued that Iraq's formal recognition of Kuwait and its borders in November is a major step in the right direction. But despite the sharply decreased standard of living suffered by the Iraqi people in the past five years, Security Council members continue to be angered by Iraq's defiance. The United States and Britain, in particular, argue that Iraq has not yet met the conditions laid out for lifting the embargo on oil sales. Ms. Albright said Tuesday she would be surprised if sanctions were lifted soon. Rolf Ekeus, head of the U.N. commission overseeing Iraq's disarmament, said Thursday that despite problems in long-term monitoring of Iraq's weapons capabilities, the U.N. system was still provisionally operational.

Israel has agreed to recognise PNA passports — Shaath

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Israel has recognised the validity of Palestinian passports issued by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Palestinian chief negotiator Nabil Shaath said Monday.

The passports are usually green, but red ones are issued for officials in the PNA. They are labelled "Travel Document — Passport" and bear the word "Palestinian Authority".

Dr. Shaath said he was "very optimistic" that Israel would soon free more Palestinian prisoners.

He was speaking to reporters after talks between Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres at the Erez border crossing into the autonomous Gaza Strip.

Israel would first release the 35 women who are among some 6,000 Palestinian prisoners held by the Jewish state, Dr. Shaath said.

An agreement on "safe passages" linking the Gaza Strip and the West Bank enclave of Jericho would go into effect next week, said Dr. Shaath, who is also Palestinian planning minister.

He said Palestinians aged under 16 as well as men over 50 and women over 35 would be able to move freely between Gaza and the West Bank.

PNA employees would also be able to travel between Gaza and Jericho without hindrance, but Israel would maintain the right to grant or refuse permission for other Palestinians.

Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres, who last met on Dec. 21, both emerged in a positive mood from two hours of talks at the Erez crossing.

"We... have to overcome a lot of difficulties but we think we'll get an agreement on the second phase (of autonomy)," Mr. Peres said.

"While we are analysing difficulties, we are also seeing solutions."

"In spite of all the worries and scepticism, the Oslo agreement is being im-

plemented, although we are late in some ways."

Under the 1993 declaration of principles for autonomy, Palestinian elections were to be held by last July after a redeployment of Israeli troops outside built-up areas on the West Bank.

But the Israeli government, increasingly unpopular as attacks continue, is refusing to pull back until security improves and negotiations are at a stalemate.

Dr. Shaath also said Mr. Arafat would visit Morocco on Jan. 16 and 17 for a meeting of the Jerusalem Committee, set up by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in 1979.

Jerusalem talks

Four ministers in the PNA held talks with officials from Berlin in an East Jerusalem hotel Monday, despite an Israeli ban on PLO diplomatic activities in the Holy City.

Dozens of Israeli policemen ringed the Ambassador Hotel but did not interrupt the meeting, Palestinian officials said.

"We discussed the peace process and ways to provide humanitarian and medical aid," said Christine Bergmann, Berlin regional minister for labour and women's rights.

The talks were attended by Palestinian Social Affairs Minister Intissar Wazir, Health Minister Riad Al Zaanoun, Housing Minister Zakaria Al Agha and Youth and Sports Minister Azmi Al Shuweibi.

Ms. Bergmann said the meeting was held after consultation with the Israeli foreign ministry, but a ministry spokesman later denied that the Israeli authorities had been informed before it took place.

The Israeli parliament adopted a law on Dec. 26 aimed at restricting official PLO activities in Jerusalem.

The law prevents the PLO or the PNA from opening a mission in East Jerusalem without prior Israeli permission, or organising public meetings there.



RABIN ABUSED: Israeli policemen pull young Jewish boys out from the western wall in Jerusalem's Old City as they were disturbing Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin's tour of the city on Tuesday. The group of ultra-orthodox Jews accused Mr. Rabin of treachery chanting "Traitor, traitor get out of here" before being removed by security services. They also charged Mr. Rabin with preparing to allow Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to visit Jerusalem. Mr. Rabin went to the wall on a tour of Jerusalem's quarters with the mayor, Ehud Olmert (AFP photo)

here" before being removed by security services. They also charged Mr. Rabin with preparing to allow Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to visit Jerusalem. Mr. Rabin went to the wall on a tour of Jerusalem's quarters with the mayor, Ehud Olmert (AFP photo)

Egyptian mufti calls Rushdie book 'lies'

NEW YORK (R) — The grand mufti of Egypt Mohammad Sayyid Tantawi said Monday a controversial novel by British author Salman Rushdie was "a collection of lies and a collection of insults and slanders."

But he sidestepped the issue of the death sentence imposed on the Indian-born writer in 1989 by the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on grounds that his book, "The Satanic Verses", blasphemed Islam.

Dr. Tantawi, now on a visit to the United States, told a news conference: "As mufti of Egypt, I am opposed, I am opposed, I am opposed to killing. At the same time I am opposed to lying, I am opposed to lying."

The mufti, appointed by the Egyptian government, is the highest Islamic authority in the country and issues opinions on various issues involving the interpretation of

Islamic law. Speaking through an interpreter, Dr. Tantawi said the country where Mr. Rushdie lived should select three religious scholars — a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim — who should study his book, discuss what he had written and ask the author the source of his insulting assertions regarding the Prophet Muhammad and Islam.

"All objective laws specify a punishment for anyone who speaks lies against others," Dr. Tantawi said.

"After the (panel's) discussion of what Rushdie has written, I will be satisfied with their judgment," he added.

"What Salman Rushdie has written is a collection of lies and a collection of insults and slanders which cannot be uttered by a decent human being."

"My judgment, therefore, is that Salman Rushdie is a religious-less person whose

chief pursuit is the pursuit of wealth."

Dr. Tantawi, who was accompanied by the president of the Protestant churches in Egypt, Dr. Samuel Habib, said the intention of his visit was to "demonstrate to the American people the tolerant face of Islam... and that Islam and Muslims seek to extend the hand of friendship and of justice to anyone who wishes to reach out also in friendship and justice."

He declined to comment on the trial, which opened in New York earlier in the day, of a blind Egyptian cleric, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, and 11 of his followers accused of plotting to bomb U.S. landmarks.

The matter was now before an American court and "it is our custom and practice in Egypt that we do not address ourselves to a case that is in the hands of the legal system," he said.

Islamists destroy mausoleums

ADEN (AFP) — Islamic fundamentalists have destroyed several mausoleums honouring senior Yemeni clerics in a campaign against the monuments which they consider to be un-Islamic, newspapers reported.

The daily Al Thawra said "extremist elements" used dynamite to blow up the Mohammad Ben Ali Mausoleum overnight Saturday in the Waht area of the southern governorate of Lahj.

Other reports said the Ahmad Hamid Al Aidarus mausoleum in Al Gawaze village, 195 kilometres south of the capital Sanaa, was blown up Friday.

The papers said similar attacks on mausoleums were carried out in the past few days in other regions, including Zaidiya, 225 kilometres west of Sanaa.

Islamic scholars should promote dialogue — Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — Scholars in the Muslim World should promote dialogue as an alternative to violence and teach respect for alternative points of view, Kuwait's Islamic affairs minister was reported on Tuesday as saying.

The minister, Ali Al Zmei'a, was speaking at a conference on trends in the Islamic World on Monday.

"He urged scholars to focus... on developing dialogue as an alternative to violence and noted that violence with weapons, although widespread, is not the only kind (of violence)," Al Qabas daily reported.

"Islamist activists ask others to respect their freedom and work. This subject has to be included in the political and cultural programme of Islamists... because you cannot take and not give. That is an extremely important issue."

Mr. Zmei'a, an Islamist with a reputation as a moderate, was appointed in April 1994 in a cabinet reshuffle seen as reducing Islamist influence in the government.

In the intervening months

a campaign by fundamentalist members of parliament to make society more Islamic has suffered a series of setbacks, notably in social and educational policy.

The government has tightened oversight of Kuwaiti charities accused of funneling money to overseas Islamic militant groups. The charities deny the accusations.

"Islamist youngsters are being trained to reach for power to Islamise (societies) while there is more than one Islamic country where these movements reached power and nothing of that (Islamisation) happened," Mr. Zmei'a was reported as saying.

He said he would like Islamic law, partly the basis for Kuwait's legal code, to be developed with "moderation... and in keeping with the time."

"The widening of the gap between interpretation (of Islamic rules and traditions) and the spirit of the age has caused a big gap that Islamic communities have started to reject," he was reported as saying.

Afghan fighting threatens peace bid

KABUL (AFP) — Forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani have bombed an airbase south of Kabul in response to attacks by rival factions against Ghazni, the provincial capital, military sources said Tuesday.

"Last night our jets bombed the enemy's airbase in Logar," a pro-Rabbani military commander told AFP.

He said the Dasht-i-Sakhawa airbase had been used over the past four nights by the alliance forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum to fly some 400 troops from northern Afghanistan to south Kabul.

Four days ago, Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami faction fighters were alleged to have attacked the provincial capital Ghazni, 145 kilometres south of Kabul, but were repelled in a



Burhanuddin Rabbani counter-attack that included strikes by pro-Rabbani jets, the military sources said.

Ghazni is reportedly back under the control of forces loyal to Governor Qari Baba, who is an ally of Mr. Rabbani.

According to pro-Rabbani military sources, the Dostum reinforcements were intended to bolster Mr. Hekmatyar's military efforts against Ghazni.

The renewed fighting came in the middle of a peace mission by U.N. special envoy Mahmood Mestiri, who Tuesday was scheduled to meet Dostum in Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan before flying to the western capital Herat.

Some Kuwait detainees held 4 years — deputies

KUWAIT (R) — Some inmates at a Kuwaiti detention centre for expatriate awaiting deportation have been held there for four years, members of parliament said in a statement published on Tuesday.

The numbers of inmates at the Talha centre has risen to 535 from 350 in January last year, parliament's human rights committee, which toured the facility on Monday, added in a statement published in newspapers.

The statement did not say how many people had been in Talha for four years or give their nationality. But diplomats have said on average around 10 per cent of the inmates have been in the facility for a year or more.

Talha, a converted school, was set up after the 1991 Gulf war. Its inmates include foreign convicts in criminal and national security cases who have completed prison terms and are awaiting deportation.

It also houses people who lack work permits, some of them Iraqi job-seekers who have been unable to find work from employers hostile

to Iraq because of its 1990-91 occupation.

The Kuwaiti government says it will not force the Iraqis to go back home and international humanitarian organisations say many third countries are unwilling to accept them as refugees, so they are stranded for the time being at Talha.

In April 1993 newspapers said Talha then held about 150 people and forecast the numbers would decline.

Parliament and human rights activists have criticised conditions at the facility, notably for overcrowding.

The parliamentarians' statement published in the English-language Arab Times and Kuwait Times said they had found some conditions had improved over the past 12 months but others remained in need of improvement and officials had promised to carry this out.

The lawmakers, who met detainees and received oral and written complaints, said the centre lacked what they called essential facilities for the elderly and those needing special care.

Jordan undergoes cautious change

By Jack Redden
Reuters

AMMAN — King Hussein, seeing both dangers and opportunities in Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, has come down on the side of caution with a government of familiar faces led by a former armed forces commander.

The newspaper Al Ra'i said the focus of the government sworn in on Sunday evening had been defined in the naming of Sherif Zeid Bin Shaker as premier for the third time in six years: "The letter of designation reflects a continuity in governing."

For months, before and after the signing of a peace treaty with Israel last October, members of the government and Royal family had talked of the need for quick reforms to capitalise on the economic opportunities presented by ending 46 years of conflict.

However, there has also been a growing effort to dampen Jordanian expectations against quick benefits and repeated warnings that opposition to the peace treaty would be tightly controlled.

The need to overhaul the business atmosphere was mentioned as the government was changed, but diplomats noted an emphasis on maintaining stability as Jordan enters an unpredictable post-peace world.

"That's been the message for months: 'Whether you like it or not, Jordan has signed a peace with Israel and that's the way it's going to be,'" said a Western diplomat, who predicted little economic innovation.

The tone is set by the choice of Sherif Zeid to head his third government in six years. His first term was in 1989 when he was called in to take over when the previous government was forced from office by price riots.

Sherif Zeid, a close friend of the King and member of the Hashemite Royal family, had been commander of the Armed Forces for 12 years until 1983.

A profile of the returning prime minister in the Jordan Times newspaper quoted him as saying: "I do not consider myself a professional politician. I am a professional soldier, which

is the job I have chosen from the beginning."

For his new 31-member cabinet, Sherif Zeid tapped more than 10 men from his previous governments. More important, former colleagues held key portfolios such as finance, foreign affairs, industry and trade.

The peace treaty with Israel, while a momentous step after decades of animosity, has not by itself solved any of Jordan's political and economic problems.

In the Arab World, it remains shunned by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, while signing a treaty further strained cool relations with Syria, still deadlocked in its own peace talks.

A collapse in the increasingly precarious Israeli-Palestinian peace would have repercussions inside Jordan, where many believe a majority of the population is originally Palestinian.

Inside Jordan, the peace treaty holds the promise of economic opportunities, but aside from the almost instantaneous rise in Israeli tourism, Jordanians will not feel an improvement in their own lives in the near future.

In the weeks preceding the King's decision to switch from Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, the man who signed the peace pact, officials and even the King have been playing down hopes of a quick peace dividend.

When an Israeli chamber of commerce delegation visited Amman this month, a dinner hosted by the new Israeli embassy attracted scores of guests. But less than 10 were Jordanians — including one government official — while the rest were foreigners.

In appointing the new premier, King Hussein alluded to the fears of outright opposition to Jordan's new path with Israel or a growing disappointment.

The switch, he said, came at a time "when we see people are obsessed by various feelings of optimism or expecting drastic changes in their lives in the era of peace and as we witness others discouraged, as they are not convinced by peace and are acting towards its failure."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fiancee admits dismembering Turk lawyer

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish woman angered by the sexual advances of her fiancée told police she murdered him on New Year's Eve and hacked his body into seven pieces, the Cumhuriyet daily said on Tuesday. Seven pieces of Akar's body were found last week in plastic bags in a ventilation shaft of the building where he and his fiancée lived in separate flats, but his head was missing. Fatma Aydin, 21, told police she knifed Akar for making sexual advances and then burnt the head in the stove. The paper said. Both were known to be religious Muslims, the paper said.

Egypt to launch TV satellite in 1997

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt is planning to launch a television satellite covering Arab countries in 1997, Information Minister Safwat Al Sharif has announced. "Work on setting up the satellite which will start in the middle of the year will last between 18 to 20 months," he told the official agency MENA. He added that 12-station Nile-Sat would cover the Arab region from "Algeria in the west up to the border with Iran in the east as well as certain Asian and African countries." He added that Egypt was to launch its eighth television channel this year. Unlike the newspaper industry, the state has a monopoly over the audio-visual sector.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:00	..... Diptodo
17:30	..... Thalassa
18:30	..... Musique Sans Frontiers
19:00	..... News in French
19:30	..... Home Improvement
19:45	..... E=M6
20:00	..... Life in the Freezer
20:30	..... Quantum Leap
21:10	..... Law and Order
22:00	..... News in English
22:30	..... Snowy River
PRAYER TIMES	
05:10	..... Fajr
05:32	..... (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:43	..... Dhuhr
14:30	..... 'Asr
16:53	..... Maghrib
18:15	..... 'Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Sweith, Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 637785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590, Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757, Terrence Church Tel. 623566	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 625453	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 773261	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Armenian Lutheran Church Tel. 652326	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 854328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly with winds southerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.	
Min./Max. temp.	
Amman	..... 4/14
Aqaba	..... 12/22
Decatur	..... 3 / 17
Jordan Valley	..... 11 / 20

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16 Aqaba 23 Humidity
readings: Amman 29 per cent,
Aqaba 35 per cent.

**USEFUL
TELEPHONE
NUMBERS**

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Jassir Maraga	776149
Dr. Nidal As'ad	751672
Dr. Khalil Abu Mayroub	783752
Dr. Ghazi Abdullah	844286
First pharmacy	661912
Ferdous pharmacy	778336
Al Asena pharmacy	637055
Naironkh pharmacy	626672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644963
Shawesani pharmacy	637650
Naironkh pharmacy	626672
Najib pharmacy	847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ali Al Shogairi	246140
Al Quds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Rashid Attallah	984424
Khalifeh pharmacy	854417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate	630341
Rescue	199
Rescue Police 192	621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	603800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	897467
Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality	787111
Repairs	(—)
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	(—)
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power	636381
RJ Flight Information	02-33200
Queen Abla Intl. Airport	08-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Husseini Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amm	644281/6
Alkhalid Maternity, J. Amm	644281/6
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malina, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shamsani	664171/4
Shamsani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845945
Al-Minshar Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic Hospital	666127/57
Al-Asli, Abdali	664164/6
Al-Asli, Abdali	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf	775111/26
Army, Shamsani	891611/15
Queen Abla Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674153

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)983323
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)987070

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Georg Catholic Hospital	(02)272775
De Al Nafies Hospital	(02)277100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)941111
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FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:45	..... Aqaba (RJ)
08:30	..... Jeddah (RJ)
08:55	..... Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:05	..... Larnaca (RJ)
10:30	..... Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
16:35	..... London (RJ)
16:45	..... Frankfurt (RJ)
16:45	..... Istanbul (RJ)
17:55	..... Paris (RJ)
18:10	..... Brussels, Vienna (RJ)
18:35	..... Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:35	..... Rome (RJ)
18:10	..... Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
23:40	..... Beirut (RJ)
00:20	..... Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

09:35	..... Cairo (MS)
10:30	..... Sanaa (Y)
10:30	..... Jeddah (SV)
11:05	..... Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:30	..... Aqaba (RJ)
06:30	..... Rome (RJ)
10:30	..... Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:30	..... London (RJ)
10:30	..... Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
10:30	..... Beirut (RJ)
10:30	..... Cairo (RJ)



Her Majesty Queen Noor Tuesday chairs members of a preparatory committee to a meeting of members of the International Committee on Peace and Food and Development Conference (Petra photo)

Queen discusses peace, development with international panel

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Tuesday met with members of the International Committee on Peace and Food (ICPF) and Jordanian members of a preparatory committee to plan a conference in Amman this spring on peace, employment and human development in the region, a Royal Court statement said.

The committee held meetings in Amman on Monday and Tuesday to identify issues of maximum relevance to Jordan and the region, the statement said.

The preparatory committee held its final session at Al Ma'wa Palace Tuesday to brief the Queen, who has been a member of the ICPF since 1992, on the findings and recommendations of their two-day meeting, it said.

According to the statement, ICPF members Garry Jacobs and Robert Van Harten participated.

The statement said Queen Noor accepted an ICPF proposal to hold a conference in Amman as the first stage in a process leading to the formulation and implementation of specific practical measures to improve peace, human security and prosperity in the region.

Focusing on the need to utilise the linkages between peace, democracy and development to improve the quality of life of the people in the region, Queen Noor said the recommendations of the ICPF are especially relevant to Jordan and to the countries of the Middle East, the statement said.

It added that the report proposes the utilisation of the region's military resources for development and presents a comprehensive strategy for employment generation. According to the Royal Court, the Queen expressed the hope that the Amman conference would reflect Jordan's commitment to human development, the reduction in defence spending and the promotion of strategies for regional cooperation and economic integration.

In the discussion, the statement said, Garry Jacobs expressed ICPF's commitment to Jordan and its dedication to human development. Mr. Jacobs added that the conference was intended to examine the relevance and application of ICPF's final report, "Uncommon Opportunities: An Agenda for Peace and Equitable Development," to Jordan, the statement said.

Although based on a global perspective, the report, which was presented by Queen Noor, on behalf of the commission, to the United Nations Secretary General late last year, also presents practical strategies that can be implemented in a broad range of developing countries, the statement added.

Also attending the briefing were members of the preparatory committee, In'am Mufti, Development and Planning Adviser to the Queen, and other guests.

50 women municipal council appointees to be trained in responsibilities — QAF

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment is planning a training course at the end of the month for the 50 women appointed to municipal councils by the government last week.

A spokesman for the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), which is cooperating with the ministry in the selection of women members to the councils, said that the new appointees have taken up their posts in their respective regions. Last October the government appointed 29 women to the councils following the efforts of Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, honorary chairperson of the QAF Board of Trustees to encourage the involvement of women in public life.

According to the QAF spokesman, the new council members will be oriented on municipal laws and skills required for their basic responsibilities in their own communities.

The first workshop was held from Nov. 24 to 25 for the first group of 29.

The serving municipal councils have been appointed by the government, after the dissolution of the elected councils last year.

These councils will serve until municipal elections are held this summer.

Chechen community appeals to U.S. to reconsider economic aid to Russia

By Cathy King
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Chechen community in Jordan has appealed on behalf of the people of Chechnya to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to reconsider the "United States' position on economic development aid to Russia."

In a letter made available to the Jordan Times, the Jordanian Committee for the Support for the Independent Caucasian Chechen Republic (JCSCR) Chairman and former Minister of Public Works Said Beano addressed Mr. Christopher, saying: "The Chechen nation appeals to your excellency to reconsider the U.S. position regarding economic development aid to Russia by the U.S. government, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund."

Mr. Beano also called for the holding of an internationally supervised referendum in the Chechen republic in which the Chechen people may exercise their right to self-determination; the exertion of pressure on Moscow to pay reparations resulting from its aggression against the Chechen nation and to pay reparations for the exile of the whole of the Chechen nation to Siberia.

In 1944 Soviet President Joseph Stalin ordered mass deportations of Chechens to Siberia, which, according to Mr. Beano resulted in the "death of 50 per cent of its (Chechnya's) population."

Under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union permitted the repatriation of the Chechen people to their homeland in 1957.

According to recent figures the Chechen population currently stands at 1.2 million.

Mr. Beano then called for the encouragement of "U.S. businesses to invest in Chechnya in the fields of oil and gas, construction, industry, agriculture and other social and economic sectors."

Grozny, the breakaway republic's capital, has, in recent weeks, come under repeated air raids and heavy artillery fire causing extensive damage and loss of life.

According to news agency dispatches the city is now without running water and electricity.

"The purpose of this aggression," wrote Mr. Beano, "is to dominate and oppress a weaker nation and to exploit its natural resources."

The JCSCR letter was sent to the U.S. embassy in Jordan to be forwarded to Mr. Christopher.

An embassy official told the Jordan Times yesterday, "In terms of the letter, we have received it and forwarded it to the secretary of state."

He added that the embassy had no official reaction or comment in regards to the letter and referred further questions on the position of the U.S. on this issue to information released by the Washington-based United States Information Agency (USIA).

According to a recent USIA report, Mr. Christopher said that the U.S. supported the territorial integrity of Russia and "would be opposed to any attempt to change its borders either through aggression from outside or from insurrection inside," but added that "we deplore the loss of life (and) the heavy casualties that are taking place in Chechnya."

Mr. Christopher is scheduled to meet Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev on Jan. 17-18 to discuss the situation in the Chechen republic.

Kabarti, French envoy discuss EU seminar

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabarti Tuesday discussed with French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajelet a planned seminar in Amman to illuminate the European Union's (EU) role in the region, particularly in Jordan. The seminar, in which representatives of the private and public sectors in the European Community countries will participate, will also discuss the future partnership between Jordan and the EU in economic, political and cultural fields. Support the EU will extend to Jordan, the establishment of a Middle East bank and preparations to hold the Amman economic summit later this year.

Qatar proposes creation of joint bank

Premier, visiting Qatari official review bilateral ties

AMMAN (Petra) — Qatar has proposed the creation of a Jordanian-Qatari bank in Doha, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Nayef Hadid who Tuesday reported on a meeting between Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and visiting Qatari Foreign Minister Ahmad Ben Abdullah Al Mahmoud.

At the meeting, Sharif Zeid said Jordan was determined to advance relations and that Amman was interested in reviving the work of the Jordanian-Qatari joint committees to promote bilateral cooperation in various fields. Sharif Zeid described Jordanian-Qatari relations as exemplary.

Mr. Mahmoud, who congratulated Sharif Zeid on the formation of his new government, said Qatar was intent on maintaining the strongest possible relations with Jordan at all levels and was hoping to coordinate its political stands with the Kingdom at the Arab, regional and international levels.

He also voiced Qatar's full backing of Jordan's peace efforts, expressing hope that peace with Israel would also be achieved on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks.

Mr. Hadid, who attended the meetings, said later that the two sides reviewed ways for further promoting their relations through new agreements and trade protocols.

He said the Qatari proposal for a joint bank entails 75 per cent Qatari ownership and 25 per cent Jordanian capital.

Mr. Hadid also announced that the Qatari official suggested the creation of a joint private university in Qatar which would employ mainly Jordanian expertise and staff.

According to Mr. Hadid the Qatari proposals met with positive response from the Jordanian side.

The Qatari side suggested the creation of a joint committee to organise land transport operations similar to agreements between Qatar and other Arab states.

According to Mr. Hadid, Jordan has requested that Qatar facilitate Jordanians wishing to obtain visas to visit Qatar, and the Qatari side expressed understanding of this request, adding that the higher joint Jordanian-Qatari committee was due to hold a meeting in Doha in April.

Prime minister visits Parliament speakers

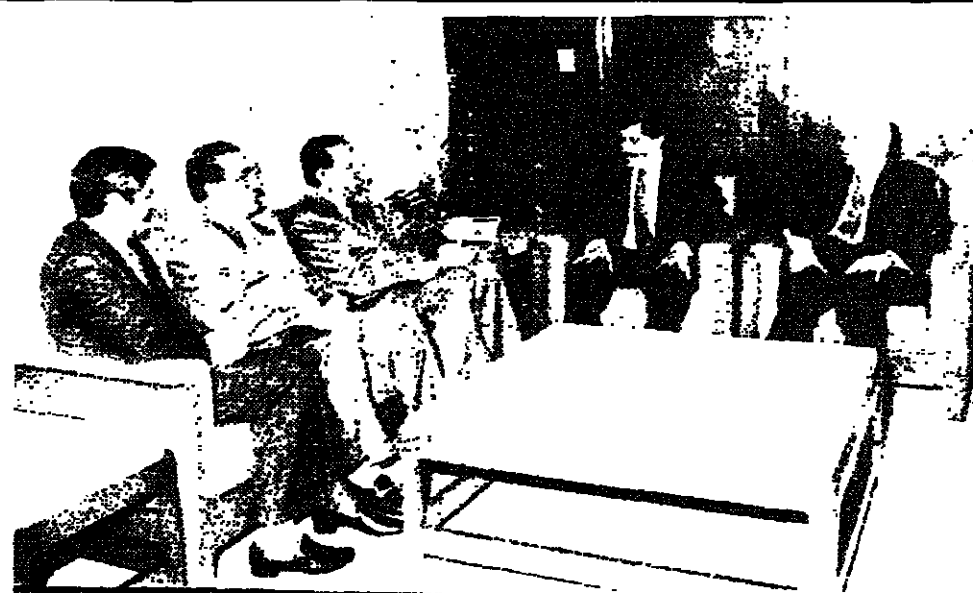
AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Tuesday called at the Parliament where he met with the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, Ahmad Lawzi and Sa'd Hayel Srour.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Mr. Srour said the prime minister stressed his government's keen interest in cooperating with the legislative power on the basis of mutual respect and respect for political pluralism in accordance with the constitutional and legislative mechanisms in force.

He added that discussion also covered the government's policy statement which will be presented to the House for debate before the end of January.

Mr. Srour said he hoped that both the legislative and executive branches can work out a mechanism for cooperation.

Sharif Zeid was accompanied on the visit by Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, Deputy Prime Minister and Information Minister Khaled Karaki, Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Ibrahim Izzedine, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Majid Azzam, and Minister of State Taha Hababbeh.



Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Tuesday visits House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour at Parliament. Accompanying Sharif Zeid here are Deputy Premiers Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh (second left) and Khaled Karaki (left) and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Ibrahim Izzedine (right) (Petra photo)

HUDD contracts to build vocational training centre

AMMAN (Petra) — The Housing and Urban Development Department (HUDD) recently awarded a local construction firm a JD 226,500 contract to build a vocational training centre at Zarqa, north of Amman.

HUDD Director General Yousef Hiyasat said that the two-storey building will be set up at the HUDD's third housing estate in the city.

According to Mr. Hiyasat, the contract covers civil works, including the laying of electricity cables, installing sanitary facilities, retaining walls, a public garden and a car park.

He said the residents of the third HUDD housing estate in Zarqa live in 1,044 units set up at the cost of JD 1.4 million in addition to JD 1.8 million that were spent on building the social and other infrastructure services.

The residents of the housing estate will be the main beneficiaries of the new vocational centre.

Earlier, Mr. Hiyasat said HUDD set up girls and boys schools on a total of 26 dunums.

The housing estate is served by a health centre and other basic services.



A weaving workshop at the Salt Handicrafts Training Centre (File photo)

NHF, Italy sign agreement on handicraft enterprises project

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government of Italy and Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) Tuesday signed an agreement by which the Italian government will allocate funds for the start-up of the "New Handicraft Enterprises" project within the framework of the Salt Handicrafts Training Centre.

The centre was established in 1987 in cooperation with the Salt Development Corporation and the Italian government to develop a new generation of skilled Jordanian crafts people, according to the NHF.

In'am Mufti, development and planning advisor to Her Majesty Queen Noor, and Jafar Shami, president of Salt Development Corporation, signed the agreement on behalf of NHF, and Italian Ambassador to Jordan Romualdo Bettini signed on behalf of his government.

The Italian side will grant JD20,000, the last part of the grant given by Italy to Jordan for the bilateral project, which has largely consisted of training activities, specialisation of Jordanian experts in Italy to become trainers and other components of technical assistance to the project.

An additional JD20,000 will be provided by local funds raised by NHF and the Salt Development Corporation to support the Salt Handicrafts Training Centre.

A committee will be established to select outstanding students at the centre from the 75 students currently studying there, an NHF spokesperson said.

Those selected will receive funds to start their own small enterprises in handicrafts, the spokesperson said.

The project, which started in 1987 and saw its first graduating class in 1991, was sponsored by a grant of about \$700,000 from Italy from 1991 to 1994.

The Salt Handicrafts Training Centre offers a free three-year training programme for students who have at least finished the 10th grade and adhoc courses for the public and crafts people. The centre also provides service programme for trainers.

The first phase of the project included training in weaving and ceramics. In 1991, the centre was expanded to include a newly renovated building which houses a permanent showroom and two pilot production units. One is designated for weaving, and the other for ceramics-making.

The project is a product of the NHF development philosophy which focuses on long-term integrated development projects that help families and communities reach self-reliance through democratic grassroots participation, according to the NHF.

7m tree saplings to be planted during Arbor Day celebrations

AMMAN (Petra) — In preparation for Arbor Day celebrations on Jan. 15, the Ministry of Agriculture Afforestation Department Tuesday announced that it distributed seven million tree saplings for planting.

Department Director Mousa Abbadi said that 1.5 million saplings went to individual and private and public organisations, and the rest were distributed to the Jordan Cooperation Organisation (JCO), the municipalities, public gardens, and universities. Another 1.5 million will be planted along roads by the concerned authorities around the country.

According to Mr. Abbadi, the department plans to plant trees on 25,000 dunums of forest areas and shrubs on 20,000 dunums of pasture land this year.

The seven million saplings, he said, were grown at 12 nurseries run by the department, adding that the department is seeking to expand its afforestation programmes to all regions of the Kingdom.

The main Arbor Day celebration will take place Sunday at Wadi Araba where Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty on Oct. 26, 1994.

Mr. Abbadi said at least 15,000 saplings will be planted at that site in a ceremony to be held under royal patronage.

Meanwhile, the Jordanian-Scandinavian Friendship Association (JSFA) Tuesday announced arrangements for tree planting ceremonies at the Scandinavian Forest near Baqa on Jan. 20 under the patronage of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Ra'ad Ben Zeid and Princess Majda Zeid, the honorary presidents of the association.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

★ Film entitled "You Only Live Twice" at the British Council at 7:00 p.m.

LITERARY DIALOGUE

★ Dialogue with novelists Fu'ad Abu Hijleh and Basel Talhoussi at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 6:30 p.m.

Pakistan and U.S. play down nuclear differences

ISLAMABAD (R) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry, starting a two-day trip to Pakistan Tuesday, expressed hopes for a broader security dialogue and both sides sought to play down their dispute over nuclear policy.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said his visit, the first by a U.S. defence secretary for 12 years, showed that relations were developing despite a U.S. ban on military aid imposed in 1990 over suspicions about Pakistan's nuclear policy.

"Both countries have broadened the nature of their relationship to encompass other matters, particularly investment and peacekeeping cooperation worldwide," Ms. Bhutto told reporters.

"There are differences between the U.S. and Pakistan — no two nations can agree all the time," Mr. Perry said in a statement after landing in the Pakistani capital from Israel.

"But I'm not here to dwell on what might be wrong in our relationship — I'm here to promote a broader security dialogue that will help us build on what's right about it."

During the cold war, the United States lavished military and economic aid on Pakistan, the main conduit for Western aid to Afghan guerrillas fighting Soviet occupation.

But after the Soviet Union's collapse, the U.S. Congress penalised Pakistan for nuclear weapons ambitions, which it denies, cutting off all military and new economic

aid. Mr. Perry now faces the tricky task of persuading his hosts that Washington's expanding defence ties with India, the next stop on his four-nation tour, will not be at their expense.

Ms. Bhutto, speaking shortly before scheduled talks with Mr. Perry, said the United States was no longer pressing Pakistan to sign an international nuclear non-proliferation treaty or roll back its nuclear programme unilaterally.

"As a result of our discussions over the past several months, the United States now accepts Pakistan's position that it is neither fair nor feasible for Pakistan to accept unilateral obligations and restraints," she declared.

Ms. Bhutto said Pakistan and the United States shared concern about the prospect of a missile and nuclear arms race in South Asia and would work together to promote global and regional understandings on nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Perry held talks with Defence Minister Aftab Shaaban Meemari which he said would cover military cooperation as well as ways to make international peacekeeping more effective.

"One focus of my talks will be the issue of international peacekeeping," Mr. Perry said. He said the United States "greatly appreciates the extensive contributions Pakistan has made to U.N. peacekeeping operations," especially in Somalia.

India exploded a nuclear

device in 1974 but says its nuclear programme is peaceful. Pakistan says it has the capacity to make nuclear arms but has decided not to. It refuses to sign the non-proliferation treaty unless India does.

The U.S. suspension of aid to Pakistan froze the sale of 71 F-16 fighters and other military equipment. Ms. Bhutto said Pakistan wanted Washington to deliver the goods or return the \$658 million paid for the undelivered aircraft.

Asked about suggestions that the United States might find a new buyer and refund the proceeds to Pakistan, Ms. Bhutto said this was possible if the money was repaid in full.

"As far as we are concerned we want either the planes and other equipment, or our money back," she said.

Mr. Perry is the latest of several senior U.S. officials to visit Pakistan in recent months. In October, Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary led a presidential mission to Islamabad during which American businessmen signed agreements which could result in private-sector energy investments worth \$4 billion.

Meanwhile, Mr. Perry kicks off a string of visits by senior American officials to India this week as the two nations bury cold war antagonisms and try to build a powerful new partnership.

Mr. Perry, the first U.S. defence secretary to come to India since the Soviet Union broke apart, is to arrive in

New Delhi Thursday for a three-day visit aimed at strengthening fledgling defence ties.

He is to meet Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who is also defence minister, as well as Home (interior) Minister Shankarrao Chavan. He is scheduled to observe a joint army-air force exercise and visit an army training school.

Spurred by India's free-market policies, bilateral business is booming. Last week alone, Levi Strauss, Anheuser-Busch and American Telephone and Telegraph (ATT) all announced new projects in the world's second most populous nation.

"U.S.-Indian relations are growing rapidly in the economic sphere," Brahma Chellaney of the Centre of Policy Research said. "It's apparent to both that unless political and strategic ties grow, it will be difficult to pursue economic ties."

U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, accompanied by more than two dozen senior American business executives, is to arrive in New Delhi Sunday, the day after Mr. Perry wraps up his tour.

Ms. O'Leary is set to pay her second visit in a year in February, and U.S. President Bill Clinton's wife, Hillary Clinton, is considering a trip later in the winter, diplomats said.

U.S.-Indo defence relations were put on a new course with the disintegration of India's former ally, the Soviet



Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (left) shares a joke with U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry during their meeting Tuesday. Mr. Perry arrived this morning for a two-day official visit to Pakistan (AFP photo).

Gingrich asks House historian to quit

WASHINGTON (R) — House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich Monday evening fired his newly appointed House historian after learning that she helped block federal funds for a school curriculum on the Holocaust because it did not present the views of the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

Mr. Gingrich appointed the 47-year-old Christina Jeffrey, an assistant professor of political science at Kennesaw State University in Georgia where Mr. Gingrich once taught, in mid-December, but her appointment was not officially announced and became public only a few days ago.

Reports of her involvement in the 1986 incident — which caused a furor in Washington and prompted at least one congressional hearing — began to surface late Monday, prompting immediate outcry from major Jewish groups and two New York legislators.

Mr. Gingrich's spokesman Tony Blankley said the speaker had left a message for Christina Jeffrey asking for her resignation, but had

not yet spoken with her directly. Mr. Blankley said Ms. Jeffrey served on a Department of Education panel which was set up to review a curriculum entitled "Facing History and Ourselves," but the panel rejected a \$70,000 grant for the programme because it was not balanced or objective.

At the time Ms. Jeffrey, whose name was then Christina Price, wrote, "the programme gives no evidence of balance or objectivity. The Nazi point of view, however, unpopular, is still a point of view and is not represented, nor are the views of the Ku Klux Klan," according to the Cable News Network.

Mr. Blankley said neither Mr. Gingrich nor his staff was aware of the incident because Ms. Jeffrey had married and changed her name in the interim.

"No one was aware of it," he told Reuters. "Newt just learned of the incident (which happened) six years ago, and upon corroborating those facts, has asked for her resignation this evening."

A White House spokeswoman said Mr. Gingrich's move to fire Ms. Jeffrey was

"an appropriate step and a prudent decision."

A spokesman for the World Jewish Congress praised Mr. Gingrich for moving swiftly on the matter.

In its Tuesday edition, the New York Times quoted Ms. Jeffrey as saying Monday that she had no intention of stepping down.

"It wasn't the kind of thing I would have said if I had known it was going to be in the New York Times. It has never been my position that you ought to be going out and finding the KKK and bringing them into the middle-school classrooms."

Mr. Gingrich's first days as speaker have been dogged by controversy, beginning with remarks by his mother last week to CBS television in which she said her son thought first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was "a bitch."

Monday's developments on Ms. Jeffrey were reminiscent of problems President Bill Clinton had with key appointments early in his administration after background checks failed to turn up information on their past conduct or views.

Sri Lanka truce holds despite rebel provocations

COLOMBO (Agencies) — A truce in Sri Lanka's civil war was in its third day with no major violations reported but senior army officers are concerned separatist guerrillas may set up bunkers in restricted areas as they did during a previous ceasefire.

Military sources said Tuesday Tamil separatist rebels were seen moving with arms in "no-go" zones around army camps just a day after a two-week truce began with government troops Sunday.

But they said the incidents were not viewed as ceasefire violations so as not to jeopardise planned peace talks to end the island's 12-year ethnic conflict in which more than 30,000 people have died.

"We're not regarding them as ceasefire violations," said a senior army officer in charge of counter-insurgency operations who declined to be identified.

"We feel they could be trying to provoke us into opening fire on them and blame the army for sabotaging the truce."

Fifteen rebels were spotted Sunday night in a "no-go" zone near an army camp on the jaffna peninsula in the north.

They left after a rebel leader and an army commander discussed the incident over radio links established between the two sides to monitor the truce.

Military sources also said

another report was received of 30 boats moving 50 metres outside the navy's main base in the north at Karainagar, also Sunday.

Rebel fighters bearing arms were seen Monday in a village in the northeastern Trincomalee district, in violation of the ceasefire deal which says the rebels can come into villages only without their weapons.

On Monday, a military spokesman told Reuters he believed instructions on how to observe the truce had probably not yet reached rebel fighters in the field.

The incidents reported by the military could not be independently confirmed or checked with rebel sources.

Under an agreement signed by President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Tamil rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran last week, government and rebel troops were to maintain current ground positions, keeping a minimum of 600 metres between each other.

Military sources said their bases were still within range of rebel mortars and light weapons despite the "no-go" zones around the camps.

"We're worried the Tigers could build bunkers and strongpoints just outside the 'no-go' zone and use them to attack us if the ceasefire breaks down," the senior army officer said.

That is what government forces say happened after a break in the previous truce

from April 1989 to June 1990. The current truce, so far without the supervision of local or foreign peace monitors, came into force at midnight Saturday in a major step towards ending the separatist war.

It followed an initial agreement between government negotiators and rebel representatives during a second round of talks in Jaffna.

In a third round of talks Saturday both sides will review the truce, decide on its extension and discuss a 40 billion rupee (\$816 million) rehabilitation plan.

Canada, Norway and the Netherlands have agreed to send two representatives each to serve as chairmen on committees monitoring the truce.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan authorities finalised elaborate security arrangements Tuesday for the forthcoming visit by Pope John Paul II, officials here said.

The capital Colombo will be brought under an unprecedented security blanket using half the 60,000-strong police force backed by troops and para-military units, officials said.

The Pope is scheduled to arrive here on Jan. 20 and leave the following day after the beatification of Father Joseph Vaz, a priest who had worked in Sri Lanka over 300 years ago.

"We have now finalised plans for the visit as well as other security arrange-

ments," said an official who attended a security meeting Tuesday. "All police units in and around Colombo have been placed on maximum alert."

The government in this mainly Buddhist country has declared a holiday for the two days of the Pope's visit, partly to keep the huge office crowds out of the city.

Meanwhile, police reported a minor arson attack Tuesday on a Roman Catholic Church outside the capital but said it was not related to ongoing protests from the Buddhist clergy against the Pope's visit.

"Indications are that the attack was a result of some sort of a private enmity involving people connected to the church," a police officer in the area said.

The country's Buddhist clergy has threatened to boycott the Pope's visit, alleging that the Pontiff's latest book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, maligns Buddhism.

Construction work is underway at a sea-front promenade where the Pope will conduct a high mass. Police said the area would be cordoned off at least four days before the visit.

"We have asked two hotels in the vicinity to provide us with their guest lists so that we can screen people occupying rooms overlooking the Galle Face Green (where the mass will be conducted)," a police spokesman said.

Fire rages on at Indian oil rig

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An inferno raged on for a third day Tuesday at an oil installation off the southern Indian coast after destroying a drilling rig in one of the country's worst oil well disasters, officials said.

The fire, which broke out after a gas blow-out Sunday, was described by officials in the state of Andhra Pradesh as "awesome and unique," the Press Trust of India (PTI) said in a dispatch from the state capital Hyderabad.

"It may take 10 days to 40 days to cap it," an official of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) told the news agency.

"We have already com-

menced the first phase of exercise to clear the debris within 300 metres."

The ONGC, India's biggest oil exploration agency, was seeking technical help from an unidentified U.S. company with expertise in handling such disasters, PTI said.

Intense heat within 300 metres of the burning installation prevented personnel of the ONGC from reaching the Bay of Bengal site off the coastal district of Kakinada, the news agency said.

Disaster control equipment was moved to the district from other oil centres in India while 5,000 people living

near the coast were evacuated as a precautionary measure, said ONGC Manager Rangarajan.

The disaster caused no casualties and no damage to the environment is feared, Mr. Rangarajan was quoted as saying by PTI. The situation was "well under control and there was no cause for panic," he added.

The \$3-million drilling rig at the site has, however, been destroyed by the fire which erupted 10 minutes after the gas blow-out.

It was one of the worst disasters at an Indian oil well, and a million cubic metres of gas (35 million cubic feet) was being burned daily.

U.S. to scrutinise aid to Africa

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. Assistant Secretary of State George Moose said Monday aid to Africa would come under close scrutiny following calls for cuts in foreign aid from Republicans who have taken control of Congress.

Mr. Moose, the senior State Department official responsible for Africa, said he believed a high level of assistance would be maintained, provided the government was able to convince Congress of its effectiveness.

"I remain convinced that we will be able to convince... the people in this country, broadly, that the actions and activities that we are engaged in represent a significant investment for the United States," he said.

Mr. Moose said the United States spent a total of roughly \$3 billion in Africa in 1994, including aid, investment in peacekeeping operations and democracy-building initiatives. This included a development fund of just over \$800 million.

Several conservative Republicans, who swept to power in Congress for the first

time in 40 years last November, have urged deep cuts in foreign aid as part of efforts to trim expenditure and balance the U.S. budget.

Among them was Jesse Helms, incoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which has a major say in directing U.S. aid. He has said much U.S. aid has "gone down foreign ratholes to countries that constantly oppose us."

Mr. Moose, who faces tough negotiations to maintain African aid at its current level, conceded that this was "a time for resource restraints... in every country around the world."

He warned African states there would be a rigorous check on the effectiveness of U.S. investment in the continent, which faces a raft of ethnic and political conflicts undermining efforts to develop and sustain democracies.

The debates with sceptical members of Congress would create an opportunity "to examine precisely how well we are doing and to explain and justify that," he said.

The goal of U.S. involvement in the continent was to create a more secure international environment and more trading and investment opportunities for Americans, he said.

He also said there was a "broad constituency of support in this country for internationalism" and said Americans, proud of their country's role as a "beacon of democracy and freedom," would respond generously to Africa's needs.

He said during 1994 there had been democratic progress in some cases, notably South Africa but also Mozambique, Malawi and the Central African Republic, but there had been severe setbacks, as in Rwanda, Gambia and Sudan.

He said lessons from the year included the need to improve organisations coping with the continent's problems, including the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity, and for the United States to work more closely with European countries to avoid duplication in assistance programmes.

New White House spokesman debuts

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The new White House spokesman Michael McCurry marked his first day on the job Monday vowing to revamp President Bill Clinton's much-maligned media relations office.

"We're going to change some things about the way we do business," Mr. McCurry said relaxing in his office armchair during the informal briefing. "I know there's a lot of excitement in the press office about doing things differently."

The White House is hoping McCurry's appointment will improve the image of its com-

munications staff, who are generally young and inexperienced.

The 40-year-old former State Department spokesman and Washington insider was tapped last week to replace Dee Dee Myers, who was often criticised for not being well enough informed.

Ms. Myers, 34, was the first woman to serve as White House press secretary and she has complained that she was not given the access to the president and his top aides necessary to do her job.

Mr. McCurry told the White House press corps he would do his best to turn

things around.

"I want to know what the president thinks and the administration is thinking," he said, promising to be "consistent with my obligations to answers."

Mr. McCurry said he would not give a formal briefing before next week.

"I recognise how much I don't know," he said. "I spent so much time in foreign affairs that I didn't pay much attention to the other subjects."

The jovial new press secretary said, however, he was looking forward to the job.

Hubble spots collision between 2 galaxies

BALTIMORE, Maryland (AFP) — The Hubble space telescope has photographed a rare and spectacular head-on collision between two galaxies that offers new insight on the birth of star systems, NASA said. A picture taken with a Hubble camera on Oct. 16 "provides a new opportunity to study how extremely massive stars are born in large fragmented gas clouds," the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said in a statement. The image shows the Cartwheel Galaxy surrounded by a ring-like feature some 500 million light-years away in the constellation Sculptor. The "ring world" was caused when a smaller intruder galaxy careened through Cartwheel's core, sending a ripple of energy into space, plowing gas and dust in front of it. The cosmic shockwave, expanding at 320,000 kilometres an hour (200,000 miles per hour), gave birth to several billion new stars in a ring that is so large the entire Milky Way would fit inside.

Kaunda told not to gripe about lousy car

LUSAKA (R) — Former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda says his government car is a wreck but people who served under him are to blame, a government official said Tuesday. "The ministry will give Kaunda a new vehicle when a new fleet of cars is ordered for leaders. Until then, the former president should make do with what he has been given," Deputy Works and Supply Minister Siyoto Kanyanda said after Mr. Kaunda complained about the state of his Toyota at the weekend. The minister said the cars were inherited from Mr. Kaunda's United National Independence Party, which was ousted in democratic elections in 1991, and he said its leaders were responsible for damaging the vehicles.

Thai man marries 2 sisters

BANGKOK (R) — A Thai man married two sisters at the same time after the younger woman threatened to commit suicide if he did not also marry her, newspapers reported Tuesday. More than 500 wellwishers attended the wedding Monday of Pratuang Bamruangchep, 28, and his two brides, Thabthim Kachabal, 18, and Aurathai Kachabal, 16, in the eastern Thai province of Chantaburi, the papers reported. Pratuang had planned to marry Thabthim but later decided to marry Aurathai as well after she fell in love with him and threatened suicide if he were rejected, the papers said. Bigamy is illegal in Thailand but the reports did not say if Pratuang would attempt to register officially both of his brides.

S. Korean Red Cross president knighted

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean Red Cross President Kang Young-Hoon has received an honorary knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for promoting friendship between South Korea and Britain, British Ambassador to Seoul, Thomas Harris, announced here Monday that Mr. Kang had been honoured for the leading role he has played since he assumed the Korean chairmanship of the Korea-Britain forum and as chairman of the Korean-Britain Society. The presentation of the award of Mr. Kang, a former South Korean ambassador to London, will be held some time in February, he said.

Mother kills drug-addict son

MARSEILLE, France (AFP) — A mother shot and killed her drug-addict son Monday after he threatened her for money to finance his habit, police said. The woman, in her 60s, was arrested after calling police and telling them she had killed her son Gilles with a shotgun in their fifth floor apartment in the town of Aubagne. A spokesman said the woman was dazed when she contacted them, and did not appear to realise she had killed her son. The young man had been taking drugs for 14 years, and had demanded money from his mother for some time.

Floods cause havoc in California wine country

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — Parts of California's wine country were turned into huge lakes Monday as rivers swelled by three days of rain burst their banks, flooding dozens of houses and forcing hundreds of people to evacuate.

Scores of stranded residents in the Guerneville area north of San Francisco had to be flown to safety in military helicopters as the flood waters rose around their houses.

Governor Pete Wilson declared a state of emergency in four of the worst-hit northern California counties, enabling them to get state disaster assistance.

The storms claimed their first victim Monday when garbage truck driver Jimmy Ruiz Medrano, 25, was killed by an uprooted tree which fell on his truck in Carmel Valley, 100 miles (160 km) south of San Francisco, officials said.

The Monterey County Sheriff's Department said recent heavy rains apparently caused the tree's uprooting.

An estimated 500 to 1,000 people have been evacuated so far in northern California — and there may be more to come, said Kati Consant of the state office of emergency services.

"There's a good chance more areas will be flooded



Fortanado Hernandez (left) and his son Angel, Hernandez's had to evacuate their home due to flooding as the weather service expects more heavy rains through the week (AFP photo)

and we'll have to evacuate," she said.

In Los Angeles, Mayor Richard Riordan declared a local state of emergency Monday in light of initial damage reports from recent storms and predictions of more to come.

"I am taking this precautionary measure to activate the city's emergency operations organisation..." he said.

Heavy rains pounded northern California for a third day as a new Pacific storm reached land. Gale-force winds and rains knock-

ed out power to 40,000 homes in northern California and forecasters said stormy weather could continue until Friday.

Sonoma and Napa counties — the heart of California's wine industry — were among the areas worst affected.

The most serious flooding was around the picturesque Sonoma County town of Guerneville, 50 miles (80 km) north of San Francisco, where the Russian River reached 15 ft (five metres) above flood level at one stage Monday.

Local officials said the floods were the worst in the region in nine years, as bad as the disastrous floods of 1986.

In some areas, there was water as far as the eye could see, its surface broken only by the roofs of houses and the tops of trees. Dozens of houses were flooded, abandoned cars were filled with water and many roads were impassable.

Many vineyards were submerged, but since the vines are now dormant the damage may not be bad, local radio reports said.

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Addressing the nuclear threat

ALTHOUGH THE agenda of the U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry during his latest visit to Israel included the subject of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, there appears to be no breakthrough on this very controversial issue. Looming ominously in the horizon is the prospect of Iran acquiring or purchasing nuclear bombs and Israel's determination to strike at Tehran's nuclear facilities to forestall its acquisition of military nuclear capability. Israel's military strategists have long clung to the notion that given Israel's small size and small population, it will have to rely on mass destruction weapons to secure itself from military threats from its neighbours, which now include far-away countries as Iran and, perhaps, even Pakistan.

Against this backdrop, Egypt and other Arab countries that have the potential of developing or acquiring nuclear bombs have refused to ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) unless and until Israel does the same. Cairo has also refrained from becoming a party to the treaty outlawing the possession or development of other mass destruction weapons, like biological and chemical arsenals.

For Jordan, the situation is quite clear given the agreement between the Kingdom and Israel under the terms of their recently ratified peace treaty to work diligently for the purpose of securing a nuclear free Middle East. Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to devise a regionally acceptable formula to get rid of the threat of nuclear or other mass destruction weapons. There is an ongoing multilateral committee emanating from the peace process to accomplish exactly that objective. We subscribe to the proposition that there can be no genuine peace in the area as long as the security needs of all the countries in the region are not addressed. The way to attain this goal is to renounce the use of mass destruction weapons of all forms and to rely on a more sane policy to provide security for all the countries in this part of the world. This should entail Israel's ratification of the NPT with the Arab side ratifying the other treaties dealing with chemical and biological mass destruction weapons on a quid pro quo basis. In the final analysis, though, the real security for all the parties in the area is to attain a full and comprehensive peace and establish a genuine peace culture. Insecurity, after all, is deeply imbedded in the mind, and as long as there are mutual fears and anxieties, no amount of legal commitments to peace would do the necessary job.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

TAHER AL Adwan, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily, said Tuesday that the inclusion in the new government of 17 deputies means that Sharif Zeid would not find much difficulty in handling matters related to, or connected with, Parliament. The writer expected the new prime minister to be in harmony with Parliament since his colleagues in the government represent different parliamentary blocs, especially in matters related to the peace process, the fiscal budgets reconciliation. He said that the present government is also qualified to deal promptly with internal issues like unemployment and to stimulate the national economy since it groups qualified and capable members. In the writer's view, the government faces a major task of winning the confidence of the public and creating comfortable atmosphere that is more helpful towards creating new jobs, encouraging investment and spreading the spirit of optimism.

MAHMOUD RIMAWI criticised Israel for demanding that the Arabs reduce their forces and end their armament programmes while it continues to arm itself to the teeth with conventional as well as mass destruction weapons. The writer said in a column Tuesday that the Israelis have refused Egypt's call that it signs the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty but continues to accuse Iran of building nuclear weapons. While demanding that the Syrians reduce their armament and end Hizbollah's attacks on northern Israel, Tel Aviv is determined to hold on to the occupied Syrian heights and the Lebanese territories, added the writer. While issuing threats against Tehran for trying to possess nuclear arms, Israel is paving the ground for a strike against Iranian installations, something which could trigger a wide scale war in the region, said the writer.

Washington Watch

1995: So far, the year of Gingrich

By Dr. James Zogby

DURING THE past six weeks, incoming Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich has dominated the U.S. media.

Like a disciplined field marshal executing his battle plan, Mr. Gingrich has seized the initiative on every front. He has restructured Congress, named new committee chairmen, defined and prioritised the issues and set the agenda the first day and the first three months of the new Congress.

It is interesting to note that throughout this massive undertaking, Mr. Gingrich has faced little internal opposition to his mandate to direct the new Republican majority in Congress. That Mr. Gingrich is far from being the most senior Republican in the Congress has never seemed to matter. And while the Republican Party is not unified, Mr. Gingrich's brand of confrontational conservatism is now the dominant trend in the Congress (especially among the large group of newly elected Republicans); and so far now Mr. Gingrich's control is uncontested.

What is equally interesting is that despite Mr. Gingrich's success in defining a national agenda and displaying a real leadership in taking control of Congress, his personal standing among the public and the press is quite low.

Immediately after the election, while the Speaker-to-be was still riding high on positive press coverage, one national columnist warned that the very media that was elevating Mr. Gingrich would soon turn against him (as it has in the case of most recent major political leaders).

When that change did occur, the columnist warned, Mr. Gingrich would sink in popularity and lose his grip on the national debate.

To some extent, that change has taken place: a number of critical articles and exposes have appeared which treat the Republican leader to harsh and unfattering commentary — but he has been unfazed by the attacks.

It is fascinating in this context to watch a Gingrich encounter with the press. He defines the agenda. As the press "picks" (like a pack of wolves) inundates him with questions about his agenda, he simply turns them away.

The Gingrich ground rules seem to be: he'll only answer the questions he wants to answer and discuss only the topics he has come before the press to discuss. And the Speaker has not hesitated to scold the press publicly for what he has described as their unfair effort to define issues themselves and not accept the definitions given to events and issues by political leaders.

For example, after emerging from the White House last week after what both Mr. Gingrich and President Bill Clinton described as a "positive" and "cooperative" exchange of views, the media pressed the Speaker to discuss the differences that divided the White House and the Republican Congress. Instead of accepting this "bait," Mr. Gingrich rebuked the assembled press for ignoring the description of the meeting as "cooperative." His firm rebuke apparently worked, since it forestalled further questions on that subject.

Mr. Gingrich's approach seems to be based on a recognition that his power is derived from his party's victory in the elections, his ability to lead Congress and set the daily legislative agenda. He understands that his personal public standing and his relationship with the press will, over the long term, be determined by his ability to win legislative battles and to continue to define the agenda, and not the other way around.

It is this self-confidence that contributes to Mr. Gingrich's leadership ability. He has been planning this Republican takeover for over 20 years. While other Republicans were content with their minority status, Mr. Gingrich planned an issue-oriented campaign to achieve a Republican majority. His lecturing across the country, his video tapes, his political fundraising and his political interven-

tions have helped in the victorious campaigns of many of the new members of the Congress not only in this past year but in several previous election cycles — so much so that many of these Republicans are known as "Gingrich clones."

And while I personally feel that much of the Gingrich message and many of the items on the Mr. Gingrich agenda are wrong-headed and, if implemented, would lead the U.S. down the wrong path — his is the only clear, coherent and self-confident programme that has been offered to American voters in the past decade.

In a nutshell, the conservative view of Mr. Gingrich is that government has become intrusive and a burden. He calls for a taxpayer rebellion that will limit the role of government in people's lives. Ignoring the essential role that government has been called on to play in ending racism, the effects of racism, in meeting the crisis of urban decay and enduring poverty — Mr. Gingrich and his movement have attracted the support of angry white, principally male voters who feel paradoxically both threatened and ignored by the social programmes of the past three decades.

By saying "the liberal press be damned," Mr. Gingrich appears to be saying, "we have the voters, we control Congress — that's the source of power." And it is this self-assurance and the simplicity of his message that has carried the national debate.

In comparison with the performance of the White House during the same six week period, Mr. Gingrich appeared as the model of principled leadership that inspires confidence in others.

The president faces a more difficult set of circumstances than the Speaker. He leads a party that is in disarray, shell-shocked by its November defeat, and a party that is none too hesitant to publicly criticize its leader.

From the beginning, Mr. Clinton had a difficult time winning Democratic support for his agenda. His first legislative effort — the Economic Stimulus package of 1993 — was defeated despite a Democratic majority in Congress. Even the president's later victories, on the Budget and Deficit Reduction Bill and the Crime Bill of 1994, were so diluted by compromises (made to win reluctant Democratic votes) that his leadership was always in question. Mr. Clinton's health care and campaign reform proposals never really stood a chance for the same reason: the failure of Democrats to support their leadership.

Today, the same Democratic Party that feuded between its liberal and moderate wings over who was responsible for Mr. Clinton's victory in 1992 — which was really a debate over which direction the party should go in Mr. Clinton's first two years in office — is once again engaged in a vitriolic debate over which wing of the party is responsible for the losses of 1994.

Party moderates, headed by the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), claim that the losses came because the president and his party have been too liberal and, therefore, lost white male support and with it the 1994 elections. Liberals, headed by the liberal congressional leadership and the more liberal National Rainbow Coalition of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, counter that Democrats lost because the party abandoned its traditional bases of African-American and unions.

The liberal wing of the party makes a better case. In fact, most of the Democrats' congressional losses in 1991 were experienced by moderate DLC members. And in elections, such as the victory of Senator Chuck Robb in Virginia and Senator Dianne Feinstein in California, it was the black, Hispanic and labour votes that were decisive.

There is a real debate over the changes that are taking place in U.S. society. Changes in technology and employ-

ment patterns (that have resulted in factories closing and making obsolete several formerly productive sectors of the economy), changes in population patterns (white Americans leaving the nation's cities and moving to the South and West or the farther suburbs), and the instability in the world resulting from the end of the cold war, and the changes in social mores — all of these have combined to produce anger and alienation and a volatility in the voting public.

It was reaction to these changes that brought Ross Perot to prominence. It was Bill Clinton's message of hope that responded to this voter insecurity that brought him victory in 1992. And it was Newt Gingrich's message of frustration with the failure of government that helped bring about the Republican sweep in 1994. While Republicans have found a coherent message in the Gingrich "Contract with America," Democrats are still debating how to respond and how to redirect their message to win back voter support.

And within this debate lies part of the president's dilemma: He leads a party of at least two, and at times innumerable, wings, with each wing competing for both loyalty and attention and neither willing to compromise or even silence its public criticism of the other. In a real sense, the Democratic majority in Congress during the past two years wasn't a majority at all.

The same lack of unity plagues the Republican Party at times, but not within its congressional delegation. The divisions that exist among Republicans will not become a factor in the national debate until the 1996 presidential campaign starts to heat up later this year. It will be then that the party's moderate and conservative wings will clash. For the time being, however, the path is clear for speaker Gingrich to lead his Republican revolution in the House of Representatives.

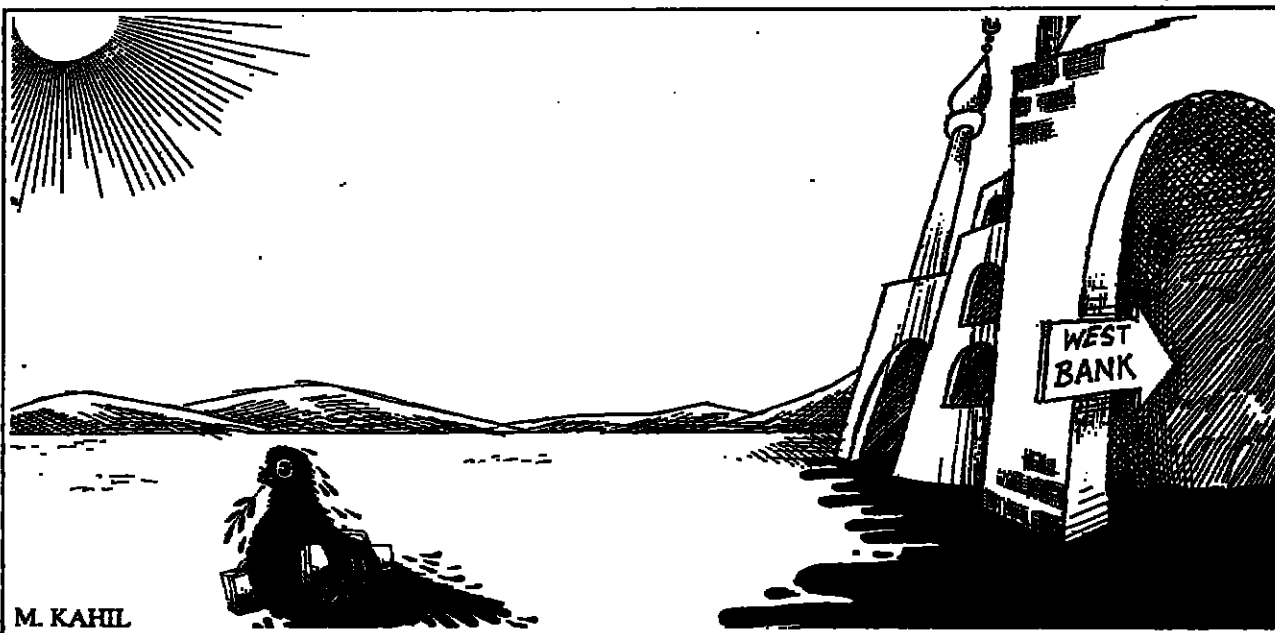
Mr. Gingrich will succeed in passing much of the promised "Contract with America." This "contract" is a rehash of Reagan Republican doctrine: tax cuts, "trickle-down economics" (tax breaks for wealthy Americans and large corporations in hope that the resultant benefits will "trickle down" into the economy to create economic growth and jobs), increased defence spending, punishment-centred anti-crime legislation, and severe cuts in a wide range of social programmes.

While it is expected that the "contract" will pass in the Gingrich-led Congress, its fate is not so certain in the more moderate and deliberative Senate. Already, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole has expressed reservations concerning both the "contract" and Speaker Gingrich's confrontational style of conservatism.

Some Democrats, and even the president himself, have now come out in favour of some aspects of the "contract," though they are trying to frame it in terms more acceptable to Democrats. For example, they are promising tax breaks for "middle class" Americans, those earning under \$75,000 a year — while the Republican "contract" defines "middle class" as those earning under \$200,000 a year.

For now, it appears that Mr. Gingrich has no plans to delay or compromise on his agenda; and it will, most probably, pass unimpeded through 1995. He will pass most of his programme, though it may never become law. The Senate will modify or block much of the House Speaker's effort, and the president will veto parts that he finds objectionable.

Until these obstacles emerge, however, Mr. Gingrich will lead. How the Speaker will react to challenges to his programme remains to be seen. But it is clear that his bold challenge to the president and his control of the national debate will be one of the defining characteristics of 1995 and will help to set the issues debate for the 1996 elections.



Rabin on ropes at mid-term

By Robert Mahoney
Reuters

TEL AVIV — Halfway through a term in which he has won a Noble Peace Prize and shaken the hands of more former Arab enemies than any previous Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin is on the ropes.

If elections were held today, Mr. Rabin's Labour Party would be trounced.

Mr. Rabin's opinion poll ratings have dipped below those of opposition Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who is better known among Israelis for his mastery of the television "sound bite" than for cogent alternatives to Labour's peace plans.

Disappointment about the slow pace of peace with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), continuing Islamic militant attacks in the streets of Israel, rising inflation and taxes, a tax on stock market profits and a public perception of an administration stuck in the mid-term doldrums, have sapped support.

Internally, Mr. Rabin's Labour Party is in ferment as the young guard jostle to succeed the 72-year-old former general.

Externally, the paper over the cracks in his coalition government with left-

wing parties is beginning to peel thanks to what they call an ambivalent policy over Jewish settlement of the occupied West Bank.

The liberal Israeli press has also started to turn on the man they once portrayed as the only one tough enough on security to be trusted to negotiate the transfer of the West Bank and Gaza to PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Former virtues are now vices. Toughness is seen as masking brittleness. Haaretz newspaper, bastion of the liberal left, has carried pieces accusing him of being isolated and tired, surrounded by bad advisers, and not delegating enough.

"We are in trouble," said one Labour Party and government member who asked not to be identified. "We are even making Bibi (Netanyahu) look good. All he has to do is keep quiet."

"The old stories that Rabin cannot make a decision, that he wavers under pressure, that he cannot delegate power, all these are coming out again. We have to counter them," the source said.

Labour's narrow 1992 election victory was pinned on the personality of Mr. Rabin, a no-nonsense native "sabna" who, because he captured the West Bank,

Gaza and the Golan Heights as army commander in 1967, could be entrusted with negotiating their future.

Reports by historians that he almost cracked under pressure in 1967 and the political scandals and charges of incompetence that brought down his only previous administration in 1977 were swept under the carpet in 1992.

Mr. Rabin, bolstered by the politically wily Shimon Peres, swept away a Likud Party fattened by 15 years in power and took Israel into talks with the once-outlawed PLO on a water-tight parliamentary majority. Any doubts about his personal competence to lead will be crucial for the next election, due by November 1996, when for the first time the prime minister will be elected directly, rather like an executive president.

"Even without the polls the situation is very shaky," said Hebrew University political science professor Abraham Diskin. "The starting point for Labour is that in the last election most people voted for right-wing parties. It is only because of 'surplus votes' (one of the mechanisms of Israel's proportional representation system) that the left wing got in," Mr. Diskin said.

Likud voters who swung to Labour as well as many right-wing Labour voters are disillusioned with the peace process. Israelis' own sense of personal security has also been undermined by mounting Islamic suicide attacks such as the Tel Aviv bus bomb which killed 22 people and the bomber in October.

"Expectations that the peace process was going to end our troubles were too high," Mr. Diskin said.

The bombings and shootings coupled with polls week after week showing Labour dropping from 44 to about 37 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, put Mr. Rabin in a dilemma.

Should he accelerate the implementation of Palestinian self-rule and talks with Syria in the hope of solid progress by 1996 or slow the transfer of authority assuring Israelis that Palestinians will control the West Bank only once they have improved their security record.

Some political commentators believe Mr. Rabin still has time to pull political and economic rabbits out of the hat for 1996.

"We have still almost two years to go," said Foreign Minister Peres, one man who could yet save or sink Mr. Rabin. "It is a long time in politics."

LETTERS

Road safety — issues to be tackled

To the Editor:

I READ, with great interest, the remarks made by His Majesty King Hussein on the appalling conditions of the roads in our country (Jordan Times, Dec. 27). It is truly regrettable that the King, with all his duties and pressing demands on his time, has to remind us of this important issue. As an ordinary citizen, I would like to suggest the following measures with a view to improving and upgrading the standard of road safety in this country:

— The highway code must be strictly enforced and applied across the board to all drivers and vehicles with no exceptions (i.e. army, government).

— The concerned authorities need to review the existing procedure for obtaining a driver licence, particularly for drivers of public vehicles: taxis, buses, shared taxis etc.

— A procedure to evaluate each driver on a points/endorsement system should be adopted — this is already common practice in many countries. This system should deal promptly and effectively with violations of traffic regulations, such as going through a red light, speeding in residential areas and failing to indicate when required. If a driver accumulates X points over Y period, then his/her driving licence should be suspended for one year.

— Public awareness is the most important issue and it should start at home, where we, as parents, should educate our children about road safety. This work needs to be reinforced at school, and no child should be frightened to tell the bus/taxi driver to slow down.

— There should be stiffer penalties in force for those drivers who cause injury to other people and/or property, due to reckless driving.

I drive across Amman every day and what worries me most are the new 26-passenger type buses which race to get past each other. How can they get away with it? There should be far stricter vigilance of speeding bus drivers, as they are not only putting their own lives at risk, but also those of their passengers. We have already witnessed two fatal bus accidents in the course of a few months late last year, both causing great loss of life.

Let us all hope that 1995 will herald in a new era of road safety awareness, with the concerned authorities and the general public working together to improve the standard of driving on our roads. Only then will the tragic loss of life, caused by irresponsible driving, become a less prominent feature in our daily newspaper.

Sameer Haidar,
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

The third lane

By Ica Wabbeh

A CLUB, called the third lane, should be established in Jordan. Its members would be exclusively those car drivers who prefer to use the lane on the right of wide roads or highways, which is usually the band reserved for relatively slow-moving vehicles everywhere in the world. The proposed club should not concern itself with the use of single-lane roads. That should be left entirely to the Traffic Department and everyday drivers to deal with. The new club members' only concern should be how to whizz along their favourite third lane, where it exists, unperturbed by the snails on the left who, at 40 km/hour, think they are at the races.

So, followers of the new entity could rally around a manifest demanding the mayor to pay extra special care to the right lane which is also the most dilapidated. Besides the patchwork of tar-scars left behind from repeated excavations to lay telephone, electricity, water, maintenance lines — the lane is also used by pedestrians — whose walking pattern, if seen from above, would look like that of an enebriated person due to the uninspired placement of trees on the side walk.

Now, if the club would come into being, with proper lobbying and financing, its members could really thrive and reach their destination faster than anybody else.

Just imagine! You tail the

car in front. You politely wait for the driver to realise that you need to overtake, but he/she, oblivious to the outside world, stubbornly and purposefully continues the itinerary with the desperation of someone who fears the road would be taken from under the car's wheels if it veers one inch. Then, perhaps, depending on the habit, you might blow your car's horn or flash its headlights. Usually these tricks do not help. So what do you do? Obviously resort to the "third lane."

It sounds ideal, smooth and easy. And it usually is. Just watch the traffic flow. The right lane is, as a rule, free of traffic, meaning car traffic. It could easily be converted into a car, bicycle or donkey lane, as things stand now.

Not that we do not sympathise with the plight of a right-lane driver in times of rain, snow or construction activity when the manholes overflow, the lane becomes a tricky rapid, the engine can stall or the sand could make the car overturn in no time.

But normally, and after the club is founded and repair works are done to perfection, the lane is the best thing that could happen to any driver.

Of course the Traffic Department will have to closely cooperate with its members and amend some of its regulations, but that will be worth the effort.

The writer is a member of the Jordan Times' editorial staff.

War coverage under Russian fire

Reporters are trapped in a minefield of state censorship, writes Sophia Kishkovsky

WHEN RUSSIAN forces carried out their most intense daytime bombing raid on the Chechen capital last month, the Russian state television correspondent Mikhail Zotov reported on the grim tableau of burning vehicles and blackened corpses.

Although he was asked to transmit this material to Moscow by 7:15 p.m., Zotov said he stalled until the beginning of his network's 9 p.m. news broadcast to slip it past the editors, who have the responsibility of protecting the government's interests. "If we had sent it earlier, it never would have been shown," he said.

Russian journalists covering the war between Russia and Chechnya find themselves fighting a government campaign against the press that harks back to the days of Soviet rule. Zotov and others face a daily flood of disinformation, attempts at censorship, and threats to end the media's hard-fought independence.

State-run news agencies were told last week that they were "obliged to provide the official point of view of the government" in addition to other sources, while the Interior Ministry accused journalists of slandering servicemen and endangering their lives by publishing secret information about the Chechen conflict.

In a televised speech recently, President Boris Yeltsin made the unsubstantiated charge that "Chechen money" was behind some mass media in Russia. Despite requests from Russian journalists, Mr. Yeltsin's office has refused to release any evidence to support his charge.

Russian troops posted in Chechnya have greeted some correspondents by firing at their cars or over their heads. On Thursday,

while the defence minister, Pavel Grachev, was promising that journalists would now be welcome to visit military units in the field, a correspondent with the Russian television news programme Vesti reported that he was shot at by Russian troops.

"The behaviour of bureaucrats in regard to the mass media has been horrible," said Otto Latsis, a veteran political commentator for Izvestia, one of Russia's most influential national newspapers. "They're not only threatening to take their money and licences, but they're not providing any information... Instead, they tell lies."

Izvestia has led the print media by covering Russian involvement in Chechnya when it was a covert intelligence operation. But television has been the most daring in its coverage. The Independent Television Network, or NTV, has brought the war into Russians' homes. Its footage of bombed-out Grozny, anguished civilians and hapless soldiers has angered the government, which threatened to revoke NTV's licence.

News broadcasts on Ostankino, the larger of the two state TV channels, have become a litany of official propaganda. Viewers are assured that the "bandit formations" in Chechnya are being liquidated and "constitutional order" is being restored to the relief of "grateful" Chechens. Programmes have portrayed Chechens as ruthless criminals.

"Of course they check the programmes — they have censorship here," said Zotov, who recalled that some of his most graphic footage had ended up on the cutting room floor.

"I assure you that there is no pressure put on correspondents. But one of our principles is, don't make things worse," said Viktor Kuznetsov, the deputy director of the Ostankino news division. "We don't show the most frightening things which our correspondents see — corpses and



A Chechen fighter in the presidential palace watches troops outside climb aboard a captured Russian armoured personnel carrier

pondents. But one of our principles is, don't make things worse," said Viktor Kuznetsov, the deputy director of the Ostankino news division. "We don't show the most frightening things which our correspondents see — corpses and

warned that democratic gains were being eroded. "Events (in eastern Europe) in 1989 gave rise to the name 'velvet revolution'," said Yakovlev, who was fired as Ostankino chief by Mr. Yeltsin last year for "bad political leadership."

"This is a velvet dictatorship, because we're allowed to talk about freedom of speech and human rights. But a velvet dictatorship can't last forever. Something has to happen."

Newsday.

Israel-PLO talks in 'crisis'

(Continued from page 1)

ing to grant residents of East Jerusalem the right to vote and reject our proposal for a 100-member council. They want a smaller number, but they haven't suggested a figure," Dr. Erakat said.

Dr. Erakat said the Palestinian delegation handed the Israelis a document calling for an election monitoring committee consisting of four judges from Egypt, the United States, Russia and the European Union.

Israel has insisted on joint Israeli-Palestinian monitoring of the elections.

Dr. Erakat, who is also Palestinian local government minister, said the two sides no longer disagreed over the participation of Palestinian opposition groups in the elections.

"It is a Palestinian affair and we are not supposed to discuss it with Israel," adding that "all Palestinians aged over 18 may take part in the elections."

Since talks on holding elections began in October, the Israelis have been calling for Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process and which call for the destruction of Israel to be barred from the poll.

Israel and the Palestinians are also at odds over the release of Palestinian prisoners and the linkage between the long-delayed Palestinian elections and the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank.

Israel radio said Tuesday Mr. Rabin will for the first time propose an Israeli army redeployment on the West Bank when he meets Mr. Arafat next week.

Mr. Rabin would show Mr. Arafat a map of a planned pull-back from Palestinian towns to allow for elections to be held for an autonomy council, the radio said, quoting a senior official.

However, the report gave no details of the scale or timetable for the redeployment.

ment which was supposed to have taken place before July 13 under the 1993 declaration of principles for self-rule.

The Haaretz newspaper said the plan would be for a staged redeployment.

The army would leave Bethlehem, Jenin and a third unnamed town but would maintain a presence in other built-up areas where joint patrols would be mounted with the Palestinian police.

"A specific answer will have to be found for each West Bank town," the daily said.

Under the proposal, the army would however remain in control of Hebron, where several hundred Jewish settlers live right in the middle of 120,000 Palestinians.

Police commander of the West Bank Eli Ron revealed Tuesday that the force was readying to adjust its deployment in the territory according to the army pull-back.

Mr. Rabin in December offered a temporary redeployment, with troops returning to the towns after the ballot. The Palestinians rejected the proposal.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a basic understanding had been reached on the principle that the army will not redeploy outside all Palestinian areas.

But differences remained over the precise areas, the daily said.

"In the end it will all boil down to specific pieces of geography," a senior official said.

"Arafat has come around to accept that Israel will not redeploy everywhere," he said.

"But the difference between him and Rabin is this — Arafat says redeployment should occur everywhere, except in specific problematic areas. Rabin says the reverse — redeployment should not occur except in listed areas of agreement."

Africa needs rich nations help on Rwanda plan

By Buchizya Mseteka
Reuters

NAIROBI — A Rwanda crisis plan devised by regional African leaders needs the support of rich nations if it is to succeed, diplomats and analysts said.

A summit meeting of leaders of seven African states — Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zaire and Zambia — have agreed the plan in the wake of Rwandan genocide and the exodus of more than two million refugees.

The leaders, chaired by Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, agreed that suspected perpetrators of last year's genocide must be separated from innocent refugees in camps in Zaire and Tanzania if there is to be peace in Rwanda.

They also agreed that safe corridors from the refugee camps to the Rwanda border and safe transit points inside Rwanda must be set up to enable the refugees to return home.

Political analysts said that the formula would mean little unless it was backed by an international peacekeeping force with real muscle.

Regional observers said none of the seven African states is able to provide such a force. They poured scorn on an offer by Zaire to provide 2,500 troops to do the job.

"That is tantamount to internationalising thuggery. Zaire has Africa's, if not the world's, most undisciplined, chaotic and corrupt army. How could it be trusted to do the job?" a Western diplomat told Reuters.

The observers also said such a force would be vastly outnumbered by the 30,000 troops and 10,000 militia loyal to Rwanda's defeated Hutu government who control the main refugee camps in Zaire.

"You need a reputable international force, a well-financed force, a force with real teeth to back the kind



A member of the International Red Cross gives some food to Rwandan children in a refugee camp in Mogadishu (AFP photo)

of formula the leaders agreed upon," a European diplomat added.

A recent United Nations plan to raise an international force to enforce order in the teeming camps appears to have died because of a shortage of funds and of volunteer contingents.

But Zaire's Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo was emphatic his country's army would be able to do the job and allow Rwandan refugees to return home.

"We shall start the job of detecting those who intimidate, those who exert pressures and exactions and believe me this organisation will allow us to uncover them and render them harmless," he told Reuters in an interview.

Diplomats also said it was necessary for the new Rwandan government, set up by a Tutsi-dominated army, to create conditions of peace and reconciliation inside the country in order to persuade the suspicious Hutu refugees to go back home.

"Much can be done for Rwanda — but without reconciliation between the (majority) Hutus and (minority) Tutsis, such efforts would be a complete

waste of time," an Ugandan government official at the talks said.

He added: "It is an illusion for one group to think it can rule without the other group. The two must come together — only then shall we see lasting peace in that country."

Rwandans speak the same language and share the same names and religion. Yet for decades an obsession with ethnicity has frequently boiled over into massacres by the two groups.

Analysts also pointed to the absence from the summit of President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and raised doubts about any implementation of the plan without his endorsement.

Zairean officials gave conflicting explanations for Mr. Mobutu's absence. Some said he was mourning a dead nephew but Mr. Kengo told Reuters he was playing host to Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos at his jungle palace.

Mr. Mobutu's full backing is needed to bring the refugee camps in eastern Zaire under control and stop cross-border attacks into Rwanda.

Egyptian bureaucrats have ways to make you wait

By Samial Nakhoul
Reuters

CAIRO — At one counter a woman was filing her nails, another sat behind a rickety desk fixing her makeup and combing her hair, others just gossiped or read newspapers.

In mid-morning the staff gathered in a corner to eat falafel sandwiches and drink their tea. At Muslim prayer time, twice a day during working hours, they went to pray, leaving hundreds of people unattended.

This was not a beauteous parlour or a cafe but the living embodiment of Egyptian bureaucracy, a staid, concrete block in central Cairo known simply as al-mogammaa — the complex.

Here civil servants, in a style stretching far back to the Ottoman and maybe the Pharaonic past, have perfected the art of making the possible impossible for the general public.

Here Egyptians and foreigners wait in the semblance of a queue for hours to obtain a document or have one signed.

Often, when their turn comes, the civil servants divert them to another counter, or turn aside to deal with something else, or demand that extra elusive document the applicant does not have, did not think of or was not told about.

Applications are put away without any filing and are often lost. It is the norm to fill out the same papers twice or more.

The well-off can spare themselves the hassle by sending messengers with a bakhsheesh (tip) for those in charge. Those in the queues are mostly the poor and the desperate.

Some of the civil servants apparently do not work at all, sitting at empty desks all day, while a small minority fend off the clamouring crowds. Unofficial estimates say the average

Egyptian bureaucrat does 27 minutes of real work a day.

"Public sector employees just clock in and clock out. Thousands wait behind doors until the clock strikes 3 p.m. to leave. Hundreds are hired to make tea and do nothing else," said a foreign official who works in the bureaucracy.

"There is no real accountability. Ninety-five per cent of the employees find a way of doing nothing," he said.

Antiquated manual methods do not make their task easier or more efficient. Without computers, the civil servants copy out by hand every detail from passports and other forms.

Heaps of application papers pile up next to yellowing registration files, all dumped on dusty desks, squeezed onto dusty shelves or crammed higgledy-piggledy into drawers.

"It's pure bedlam," said Hani Hassanein, looking around him.

"They drive us crazy until we get our papers done. They make us suffer. They send us from one counter to another... go here, go there, come back tomorrow, next week... see the officer."

"They give us hell. Each day we spend here is like a year. They are spongers and parasites, they are lazy and incompetent. They can never do things on the spot. They make you come and go until they exhaust you," said Samira Hammouda.

Etaf Shehata, a 30-year-old Palestinian teacher with a relatively simple transaction to accomplish, knew her story by heart well before she came even close to success.

"My brother and two sisters have their residence permits registered on my mother's passport but when my mother got a new passport the officer who did it did not transfer them. He dropped them. So we need to register them on my

mother's new passport. This is the old passport, please make it like this.

"Please, please, for God's sake I've been coming here and waiting for weeks like this. I've been here all day."

"Well, you will be spending another week like this," answered the man behind the counter. "So what do you want exactly? Don't speak so fast and tell me the problem again."

And off he sent her to another counter.

Four hours later, after many parroted explanations, several setbacks and two visits to the section head, there were sighs of relief all round and the teacher rushed to pay and get out.

"We're closed for today," said the cashier. "Come back tomorrow. We don't accept applications or cheques after 12." He ignored her argument that it was two hours to closing time.

The complex may be the pinnacle of Egyptian bureaucracy but the picture is much the same throughout the plethora of government departments and huge state-owned enterprises.

In decrepit offices, underemployed workers sit on top of each other. In some cases 30 people are hired to perform a task that only five could do.

Graduates wait for years for the low-paid jobs the government guarantees them. The government says it has to keep on unnecessary workers and hire new young ones, or risk public discontent.

"Bureaucracy in Egypt is a social welfare net. People within the bureaucracy do absolutely nothing," said a foreign official.

"Nobody wants to rock the boat, but you have to take risks to end bureaucracy. What is true in Egyptian bureaucracy is that some traits of bureaucracy worldwide are taken to extremes."

Actual foreign investment in China soars, contracts fall

BEIJING (AFP) — Actual foreign investment in China soared 38 per cent in 1994 over the previous year to \$27.7 billion, a report said Sunday, revealing that the value of new contracts had however fallen sharply.

Contracts signed last year were worth \$68.1 billion, Xinhua quoted ministry of foreign trade and economic cooperation official Liu Zhiren as saying, acknowledging a fall over 1993 but giving no precise figure.

Contracts worth more than \$100 billion were signed that year.

The official was nevertheless upbeat about the results, pointing to an improvement in the quality of new projects.

Most of the 41,000 items approved last year were large industrial projects, particularly focusing on energy, transport and other infrastructure facilities, while speculation in real estate was "basically curbed," Mr. Liu was quoted as saying.

While the success of Chinese efforts to shift the focus on investment has played a part in the falling value of contracts since the first quarter, foreign economists say the trend also reflects the credit crunch here and a waning of the China investment euphoria of recent years.

Investors are now becoming more aware of the obstacles to doing business here and reassessing their estimates of the Asian giant's potential.

Chinese officials have said the fall has also resulted from moves to clamp down on "false foreign deals" — Chinese companies that set up abroad in order to reinvest here and enjoy preferential policies reserved for foreign-funded projects.

Meanwhile, China is to expand its network of state-level economic zones, with inland provincial capitals to

Japan, U.S. reach financial services agreement

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan and the United States reached an agreement on financial services Tuesday as Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama prepared for talks in Washington with President Bill Clinton.

The agreement, announced by Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura in Beijing, requires Japan to liberalise pension funds, investment trusts, cross-border financial transactions and securities activities, the finance ministry said.

The accord, part of a bilateral economic framework drawn up in the middle of 1993, also requires the United States to improve the environment for foreign banks and securities companies. Mutual measures are also included.

"The agreement is very significant not only for Japan-U.S. economic relations but also for the liberalisation of international financial transactions," Mr. Takemura said in a statement released by the ministry.

"It is very significant for the two countries," he added.

The accord followed a telephone call Tuesday between Mr. Takemura, currently visiting China, and the acting head of the U.S. Treasury, Frank Newman. "I am very pleased that the final agreement could be reached now," Mr. Takemura said.

"Japan is actively proceeding with the deregulation of the overall economy and we will steadily and sincerely implement the latest decision," he added.

The announcement came only hours after Mr. Murayama left for Washington on his first visit to the United States since assuming office in June last year.

Under the agreement,

Japanese public pension funds are to be opened to investment advisory companies as early as April, the finance ministry said.

The ministry also said that investment advisory companies would be allowed to deal with national mutual funds and a mutual fund operated by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp. (NTT) during the fiscal year starting in April.

Japanese trust banks and insurance companies are currently the only financial institutions allowed to manage public pension and mutual funds.

Among other measures to be taken by Japan, the minimum capital requirement for investment trusts of 300 million yen (\$3 million) will be removed and replaced with a minimum net asset requirement of 50 million yen.

Japan is also required to clarify procedures used to define what securities actually are as well as simplifying cross-border financial transactions, especially in the area of Eurobond issues and offerings of samurai bonds.

The United States is required to improve its treatment of foreign banks and securities companies operating on its territory and assure that foreign banks are given national treatment, the ministry said.

The mutual measures call for both countries to maintain transparency in administrative procedures, strengthen the application of anti-monopoly laws in the area of financial services and avoid the use of numerical targets.

"The two countries will use objective criteria and not numerical targets to assess the implementation of the

measures," the ministry said.

Japan has frequently balked at the idea of using numerical trade targets, leading to the collapse of the framework negotiations in February last year during a visit to Washington by then prime minister Morihiro Hosokawa.

The financial services agreement virtually ensures that the summit between Mr. Murayama and Mr. Clinton Wednesday will be free of the usual bickering over trade, leaving the two leaders to concentrate on other aspects of the relationship.

Japan and the United States have already announced plans to revive stalled talks on automotive trade this month and expect to reach an accord on Japanese government purchases of foreign computers some time this week.

Dhaka to continue reforms despite political crisis

DHAKA (R) — Bangladesh's Finance Minister Saifur Rahman said Tuesday the government would keep going with economic reforms despite the political turmoil in the country.

"Financial reforms, trade liberalisation and fiscal reforms will continue and be pursued vigorously despite the present political impasse," he told a visiting International Monetary Fund (IMF) team.

Bangladesh has been badly shaken by a long-running political dispute over opposition demands for early elections under a neutral caretaker government.

Mr. Rahman said there might be some delay in the process of reforms because of strikes and blockades planned by opposition parties.

Bangladesh has been praised for achieving macro-economic stability, containing inflation at about two per cent and raising foreign exchange reserves to more than \$3 billion.

The government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia also managed to cut down unproductive expenditures and provide 36 per cent of development fundings from domestic resources in 1993/94 (July-June), according to official figures.

Bank of Spain intervenes to support the peseta

LONDON (AFP) — The Bank of Spain intervened to support the peseta at about 87.90 pesetas to the mark after it had fallen to an historic low point of 88 pesetas in a climate of panic, dealers said here Tuesday.

The intervention, which consisted of selling marks for pesetas, then pushed the Spanish currency back up to about 87.10 pesetas to the mark. The peseta was being traded at 86.52 at the close in London on Monday.

The peseta has declined sharply since Wednesday when an interest rate increase by the Bank of Spain was badly received by the market.

"People are panicking about the peseta," said Peter Wood, a dealer at the Bank of Boston.

"There are rumours of Spain pulling the peseta out of the exchange rate mechanism (ERM), but I can't really see why they would do that as it is still well within its ERM fluctuation bands," he added.

At Midland Global Markets, analyst Ken Watter said that there was likely instead to be "a period of protracted political uncertainty," something which financial markets were unlikely to take well.

Jobless to be Russia's biggest problem, minister says

MOSCOW (R) — Unemployment in Russia is more than three times the official figure and will soon be the country's greatest social problem, Labour and Employment Minister Gennady Melnikyan told ITAR-TASS news agency.

Around 1.5 million people in Russia are officially registered as unemployed, but Mr. Melnikyan said the real figure was around 5.1 million.

If one added the 4.8 million people on unpaid leave or part-time work the figure rose to almost 10 million people — or 13 per cent of the workforce — which was an indication of what was to come, he said.

The minister is worried about the excessively quick rate at which hidden unemployment is becoming real. He thinks this could lead to a sharp increase in social tension and confrontation, TASS said.

Top officials, fearing a possible social explosion, have frequently given gloomy forecasts of joblessness. They say closing factories pushes unemployment up and triggers social unrest in regions dependent on a single employer.

The official forecast that, once bankruptcy laws start to bite, hundreds of thousands of people working in inefficient plants and enterprises will lose their jobs.

Mr. Melnikyan said a whole series of measures had to be taken to deal with the rise in joblessness. Unemployment benefit had to be boosted and the federal employment service should step up its re-training programmes.

Meanwhile, Russia had a trade surplus of \$20 billion last year from a surplus of \$15.6 billion in 1993, the Russian external economic relations ministry estimated.

Sweden introduces belt-tightening budget

STOCKHOLM (R) — Sweden introduced a belt-tightening budget Tuesday with the first major cuts to the country's famous welfare state to try to tame a fast-growing state deficit and debt.

Finance Minister Goran Persson, unveiling his first budget since a Social Democratic government took office in September, announced cuts to child benefits and unemployment allowances and in virtually every area of government spending.

The biggest savings would come from the social affairs ministry — 8.4 billion crowns (\$1.1 billion) by 1998 — but even the Swedish king will have to save as the royal

family's allowance is reduced.

"We now have a unique chance of using an economic upswing to stabilise central government debt and thereby bring Sweden into a good economic path," Mr. Persson said.

"If this opportunity is not taken now, when the next slowdown comes we risk being forced into very painful changes in the Swedish welfare state," he added.

Mr. Persson unveiled 21.7 billion crowns (\$2.9 billion) in spending cuts in the budget. A mixture of spending cuts and increased taxes would raise 114.2 billion crowns (\$15.2 billion) by 1998, reducing the state's financial deficit to seven per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) from 13 per cent today.

Economists however said the budget was too little too late.

Sweden has been left with a huge mountain of debt of around 1.3 trillion crowns (\$173 billion) after pumping large amounts of money into the welfare state in the 1970s and 80s.

"The budget is as good as anyone could expect. There are no tax increases. Persson has delivered what he promised in full," said Keld Holm, economist in Lehman Brothers in London.

UAE to base '95 budget on current oil prices

ABU DHABI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is basing its 1995 budget on current oil prices, minister of state for finance and industry Ahmad Bin Humaid Al Tayar said Monday.

Asked by reporters what oil price the Arab Gulf state's budget would be based on, Mr. Tayar said: "Current prices."

"If there's any improvement (in oil prices) it will help, but we can't base a budget on that," he added, speaking after a weekly meeting of the UAE's cabinet in Abu Dhabi.

February futures for the world benchmark Brent Crude oil closed at around \$16.80 in London Friday.

UAE President Zaid Bin Sultan Al Nahayan Monday issued a decree authorising monthly allocations equivalent to one-twelfth of the 1994 budget.

The Emirates News Agency which reported the decree said the allocations were intended to pay mostly for salaries and social programmes until the new budget was ready.

Last year the cabinet approved the budget in February and Sheikh Zaid signed it into law in May.

It has yet to approve the 1995 budget and Mr. Tayar declined to say how it might differ from last year's, which set revenues at 16.2 billion dirhams (\$4.4 billion) and spending at 17.61 billion (\$4.79 billion).

The UAE's 1994 budget incorporated spending cuts of about one per cent from the previous year's levels.

"Last year's (economic) performance was good but... the price and our (OPEC) quota... will affect expenditure at the federal and local level in 1995," Mr. Tayar said.

But he said any cuts in spending on public projects would come in the form of trimming costs rather than cancellations.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: One of the best days this month to seek out those interest that appeal to you, and decide if you want to make them part of your life. Study your practical relationship with others and try to improve them.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be enthused about whatever your activities are and get much completed beautifully, even if delays occur. Take it easy tonight with your loved ones.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Plan early to get into new outlets which can lift you out of the doldrums and make your life happier and more profitable for the future.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There may be a myriad of small tasks to be handled at home, so see to it that they are done. Invite close friends in for the evening.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) First handle desk assignments wisely, then have important talks with fellow associates. Tonight is best for being with a companion.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be more practical and handle your affairs more intelligently. Be sure you handle financial affairs correctly. Be romantic in the evening with mate.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get yourself into the position which is most to your liking. Feel happier. You are a discriminating person and get fine results.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Early get business affairs attended to wisely, later, handle personal affairs quietly. Enjoy some romantic interlude in your own way.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) Being with the most precise friends you know and getting their views for your personal advancement is wise now. Take it easy tonight.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day for handling any credit and career matters which are important. Gain backing from a powerful individual.

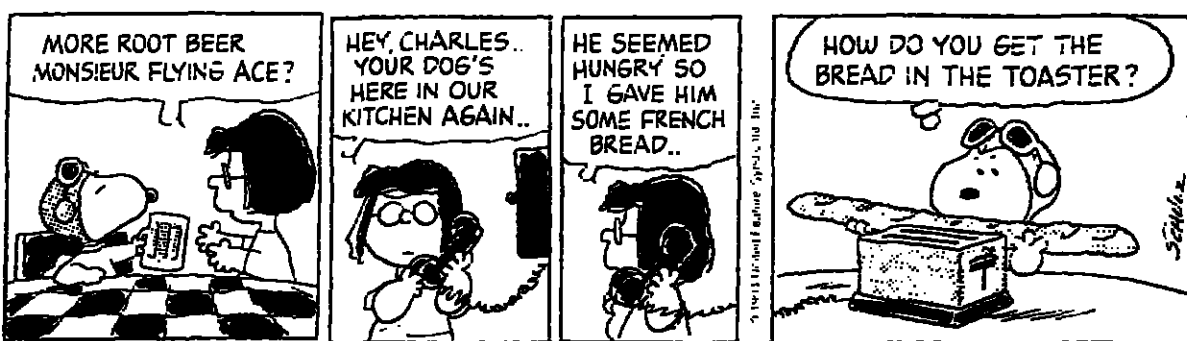
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Plan how to get out of that rut you are in. Cultivate a new acquaintance, and turn this person into a good friend who trust.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Get busy at business affairs which can give you a greater abundance and make property more valuable. Be happy with your mate.

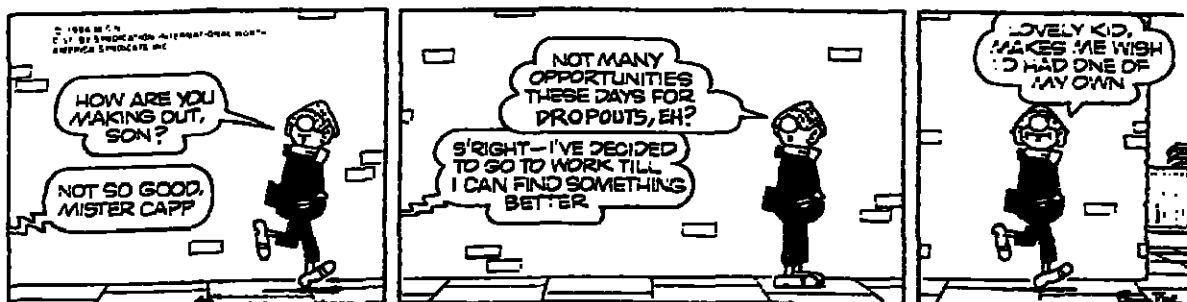
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Discussions with your partners can lead to something very worthwhile, so get in touch with them early. Be with a charming person.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Peanuts



Andy Capp



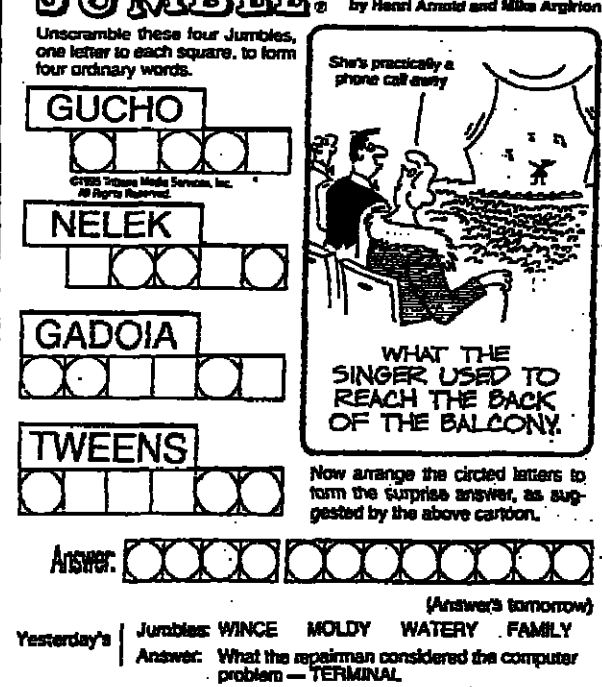
Mutt'n'Jeff



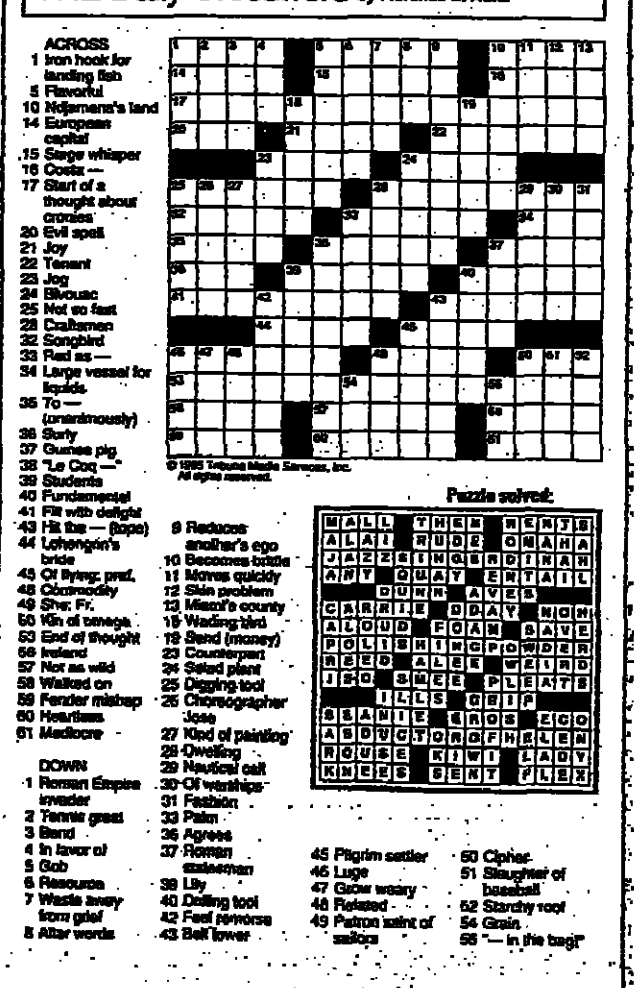
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



THE Daily Crossword by Florence C. Adler



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Paris-Dakar Rally Vatanen breakdown puts him out of contention

CHINGUETTI, Mauritania (R) — A broken radiator cost Ari Vatanen all chance of a fifth title in the Dakar Rally. He ended up stranded in the desert on Monday and unable to defend the lead he has held for the best part of a week.

Vatanen's Citroen broke down after 467 kms of the 504-km eighth leg from Zouerat across the Mauritanian sands.

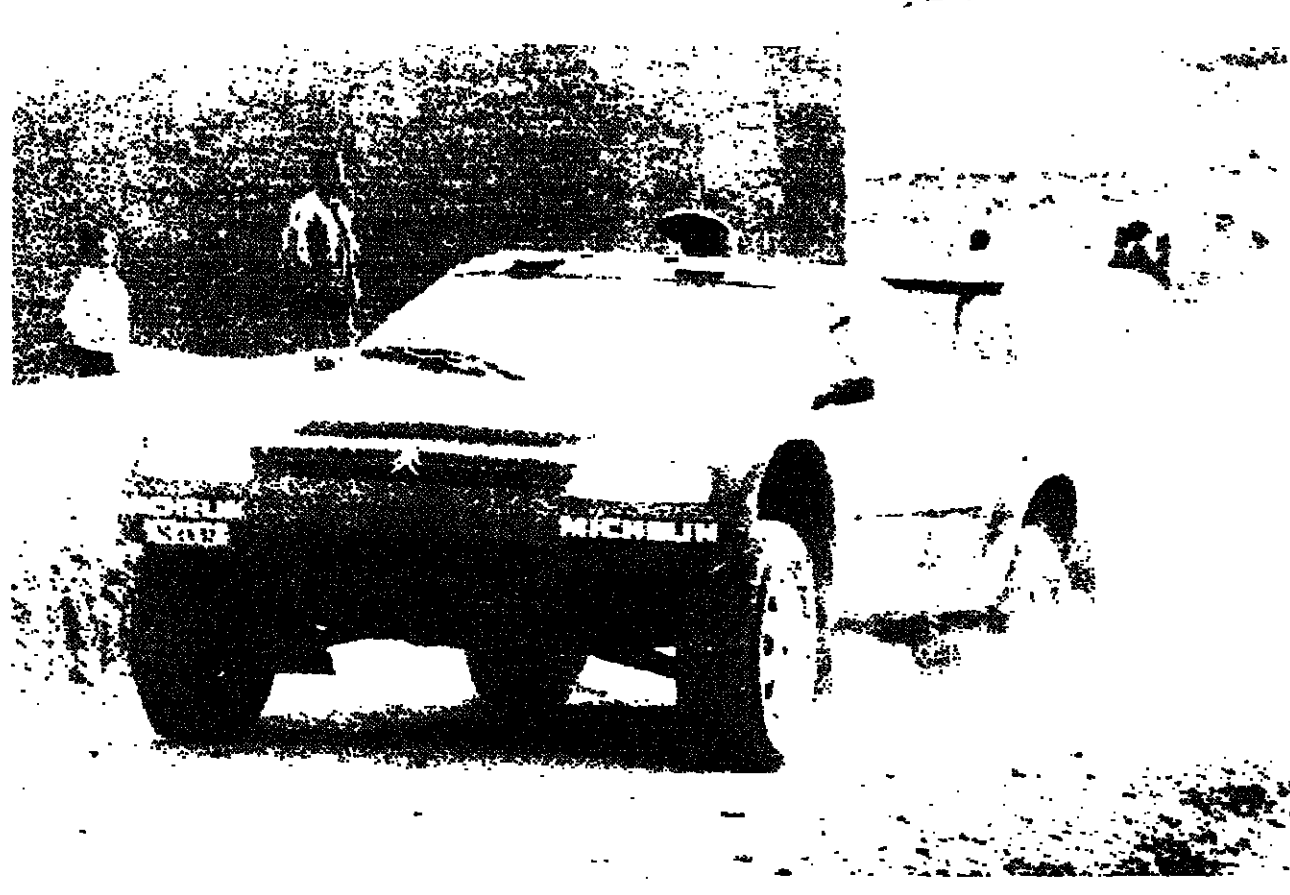
He managed to buy water from local nomads and got his car going. But he broke down again a few kilometres later.

His Citroen teammate, Pierre Lartigue, last year's rally winner, gained the overall lead after a tough day's driving during which winds whipped up a sandstorm.

Lartigue leads by just over 20 minutes from 1993 winner Bruno Saby, driving a Mitsubishi.

Barring a double mishap, the two Frenchmen are the only ones with a realistic chance of winning the race which finishes in Dakar Sunday. Third-placed Kenjiro Shinozuka of Japan is more than two-and-a-half hours behind in his Mitsubishi.

Spain's Jordi Afcarons retained the lead in the motorcycle section on his Cagiva but a thrilling finish can be expected with three-times winner Stephane Peterhansel of France only



Finnish driver Ari Vatanen speeds through a village in Morocco during the third stage of the Paris-Dakar Rally (AFP photo)

seven minutes behind on a Yamaha.

Frenchman Thierry Magnaldi is well in contention on his Yamaha and last year's winner, Cagiva rider Edi Orioli of Italy, is not entirely out of sight.

The sand storm caused major problems for most of the riders. Former race leader Heinz Kinigadner of Austria

and American Danny Laporte lost considerable time after getting bogged down in soft sand.

Thrill sport costs lives for death-wish kids

PARIS (AFP) — The winter boom sport snowboarding has been given a new and dangerous twist on the ski slopes of Europe.

The sport which took off in the United States has gathered a cult following among kids seeking thrills at all costs.

For them that means dicing with death by avalanche surfing — using the base of their board to kick-start snow slips then riding their crest for kicks.

The spate of deaths on the European ski slopes in the last month — six in one weekend alone — was blamed by resort officials mostly on the irresponsibility of people who wandered off piste and were swallowed in avalanches on dangerous tracts of snow.

The new breed of winter sports fan scorns the crowd and heads for the virgin snow, high on the cols were the real thrills, and dangers, are to be found.

"My wardens spend their days being insulted when they advise these kids not to go off piste," said Jean Neel, head official at the Val d'Isere ski resort in the French Alps.

"Then they spend their evenings being insulted again when the kids come back and say 'we're still here'."

"The worst thing is the flouting of regulations," said Jean-Loup Costerg, an official at Val d'Isere who is in overall charge of piste maintenance and security for all French ski resorts.

"People go anywhere anytime, after heavy snow falls or high wind. There are specialist magazines that tell them to do just that to get their kicks at all costs."

At Val d'Isere, a group of young Swedish snowboarders recently went in search of thrills away from the regulations ski runs and found tragedy instead.

Richard Olof Holger, 24, died in an avalanche and one of his friends was injured.

"In that accident with the Swedes at Val d'Isere they were having fun setting off their own avalanches. The third one got them," said Costerg.

Snowboarding was brought to Europe from

the United States in the late 1980s and has since won thousands of fans all over the world.

The sport has developed into a multi-million-dollar industry with its own World Cup series, and with the backing of International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch, the sport is hoping to make its Olympic debut at the Nagano Games in Japan in 1998.

But on the ski slopes of Europe snowboarders are the outlaws, flouting the rules and flirting with danger.

The director of one Alpine resort said recently that security in ski resorts in the United States was far tighter than in Europe.

"On the slopes over there, rule-breakers are banned," he said. "They just get told to go home. Here they do what they want. Nobody lays down the law."

This season has brought more snowboarders than ever before to the Alpine ski stations and most obey the same rules as the more traditional winter sports fans. But many don't and a few pay a heavy price.

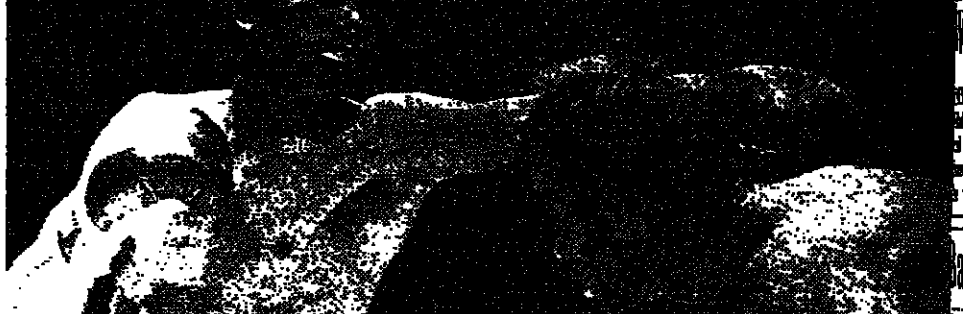
German teenager Christophe just wanted that extra thrill in La Plagne in the French Alps. The 19-year-old ducked under a safety cordon with two friends and ignored at least one danger sign.

He never came back, carried off in an avalanche and a resort warden told later how he pleaded with the three teenagers to stay on the piste.

Seven people were killed on the slopes in Austria within two days last week, most of them on virgin snow off the normal ski runs.

At least one was a snowboarder, a 25-year-old Australian who started his own avalanche and whose body was recovered a day later along with three Germans who were also swept to their deaths.

With fresh avalanche warning posted this week in the Alps and the Pyrenees, the danger for the death-wish kids is greater than ever.



Picture taken 20 August 1972 in Copenhagen showing Argentine Carlos Monzon (left) during his fight against Tom Epps of Denmark. Carlos Monzon, one of the great boxers of all-time was killed in a car accident Saturday as he was driving back to prison (AFP photo)

Boxing great Monzon dies on way to prison

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Carlos Monzon, one of the great boxers of all-time, was killed in a car accident on Sunday as he was driving back to prison.

The former world middleweight champion, sentenced to 11 years in 1988 for the murder of his wife, had been on parole for good behaviour. He was returned to prison from his home in San

ta Fe.

Monzon knocked out the legendary Italian Nino Benvenuti in the 12th round in November, 1970, in Rome and defended his title 14 times up to 1977.

He retired after his second 15-rounder with Colombia's Rodrigo Valdez at Monte Carlo in July, 1977.

"He was one of the greatest," said Benvenuti, the 1960 Olympic welterweight champion who was knocked out in three rounds in their re-match in 1971 in Monte Carlo.

"He has to be remembered for his sporting career and not for the trouble he got into afterwards."

Eleven of Monzon's world title fights were in Europe and one of the best was a pulsating 15-rounder against Frenchman Jean-Claude Bouttier in Paris in 1973 when he became friend of actor Alain Delon.

The movie world became his second career although he will not be remembered for his string of bit parts in spaghetti-style films.

He was convicted and jailed for murdering his wife Alicia Muniz, by throwing her off the balcony of the house in February, 1988.

Argentine President Carlos Menem said: "I'm very sad. I stayed in contact with Carlos Monzon by letter and through mutual friends like Alain Delon. In these type of circumstances one thinks the good he did for Argentina."

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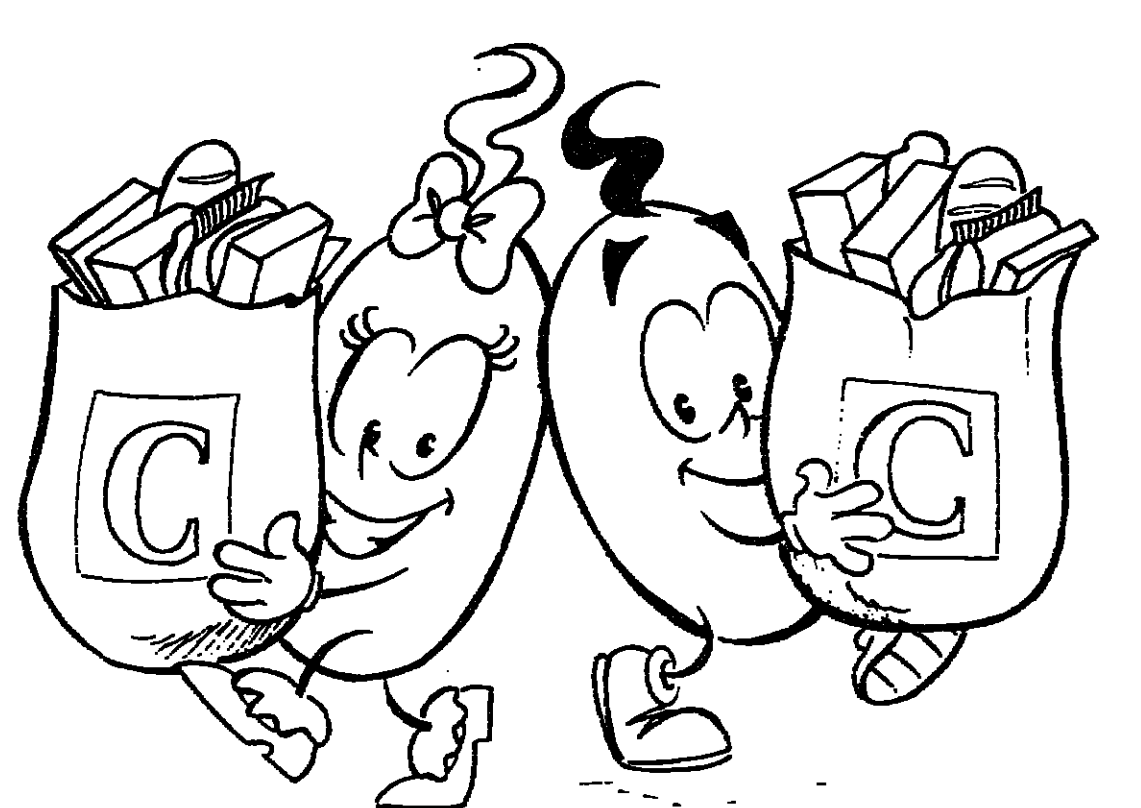
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Jim Carrey in THE MASK Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Julia Roberts/Nick Nolte in I Love Trouble Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 The Lion King Shows: 10:30, 12:30, 3:30, 5:00		CONCORD "1" Sylvester Stallone - Sharon Stone THE SPECIALIST Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD "2" Harrison Ford - Whitney Houston — THE BODYGUARD Shows: 3, 5		will soon present: Mousa Hijazin (SUM'AA) In the satirical political comedy: Hi Citizen		Presents Abu Awwad In the social comedy Punctured Bag The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day		Presents: The political satire: Al Salam Ya Salam Daily at 8:30 Saturday & Sunday is the theatre's holiday. in English Sunday January 15, 1995	

Sheffield's 'Irish' luck runs out

SHEFFIELD (AFP) — The luck of Sheffield United's brave Irish goalkeeper Alan Kelly finally ran out late in the second-half in Monday night's entertaining F.A. Cup clash against holders Manchester United when first Mark Hughes and then Eric Cantona fired in superb goals.

Reduced to ten men after just twelve minutes when Charlie Hartfield was sent off for a tackle on the French striker, Kelly produced a series of breathtaking saves to keep his team in the hunt. But in a repeat of his feat twelve months ago, Welsh striker Hughes sank Sheffield with a 79th minute header. Cantona then rubbed salt in the home side's wounds with a clever lobbed goal to ensure United a fourth-round clash at home against Wrexham.

Both of the Manchester United goals were set up by Ryan Giggs, at last showing the class that has eluded him for much of the season. And manager Alex Ferguson preparing for Premiership showdowns with Newcastle and Blackburn, was further boosted by successful comebacks by Peter Schmeichel and Lee Sharpe.

And they will feel lucky, having beaten Sheffield United on their way to their 1990 and 1994 F.A. Cup wins — and Wrexham on the path to their 1991 European Cup Winners' Cup triumph.

But this win was every bit as hard as they feared at Bramall Lane, where the legacy of spite from last January, when Hughes was sent off after scoring, soured the game when Arsenal reject Hartfield was sent off for cuffing Cantona.

Sheffield's anger had been fuelled when Darlington referee Robbie Hart denied them a clear penalty as Steve Bruce scythed down Nathan Blake in a desperate scramble from Paul Rogers' cross.

Rogers was no incensed he was booked for dissent and then lunged through young Nicky Butt, sparking the melee in which 23-year-old Hartfield, dismissed in the Anglo-Italian Cup this season, lost his cool as the Frenchman kicked out at him.

But the Premiership giants, forced to accelerate Schmeichel's comeback when Gary Walsh succumbed to the Old Trafford 'flu epidemic, struggled to make the extra man count.

They were already indebted to their Danish goalkeeper in the gale-force wind and rain, when he scooped out Blake's sixth minute close range shot and then saved again when 20-year-old John O'Kane's clearance came back off Glyn Hodges.

Bassett's Australian find Carl Veart tormented them, Dennis Irwin deflecting his falling volley behind and then booked for a foul on the man from Adelaide. Bruce was shown his sixth yellow card of the season for a two-footed foul on Blake which earned him a two-game ban.

It took Ferguson's champions 28 minutes to create their first chance — Hughes' header from Giggs being well held by the diving Kelly.

The goalkeeper was beaten by Hughes' stooping header three minutes later but the ball crashed back off his right hand post.

Manchester's running game began to stretch the home side, and with the wind at their backs, both Keane

Tomba bombs out rivals

PARIS (AFP) — Alberto Tomba loves his playboy reputation — but he loves skiing even more.

The city boy from Bologna who took the ski world by storm in 1988 by winning two gold medals at the Calgary Olympics can still summon up the adrenalin racers need to win what are essentially time-trials.

The 28-year-old Italian has wonderful balance and tremendous strength but that is only half the battle in a sport which pits each individual against the clock.

Tomba loves the excitement and, better still, loves the adulation that comes from winning.

"But don't let his showmanship fool you," said Swiss great Primin Zurbriggen whose record of 40 World Cup wins Tomba equalled on Sunday.

"He obviously works hard at his sport and putting on a show. And you have to acknowledge he is simply one of the best slalom racers ever."

Tomba stretched his unbeaten run in World Cup races to seven on Sunday when he won a slalom at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany for the third year running. Alongside his five slalom wins, he has also won two of the four giant slaloms raced this season. He was fourth in the first and pulled out with cracked ribs in the second.

Tomba, who also won the last two slaloms last season, has not been beaten in this event since finishing third at Kitzbuhel, in Austria, on Jan. 16, 1994.

He needs two more slalom wins to equal the all-time record of seven set by Sweden's Ingemar Stenmark in 1976-77 and matched by Marc Girardelli in 1984-85.

Only Girardelli, with 43, and Stenmark, with an unreachably 86, have won more World Cup races.

He has two chances to do so in Kitzbuhel and Wengen, Switzerland, this weekend before the World Championships in Sierra Nevada, Spain, at the end of the month interrupt the World Cup.

Tomba has never won the World Cup and never been higher than third in a World Championship race.

"My number one priority is the World Championships," he said. "I know I have little real hope of winning the World Cup."

He chose to prolong his career because of the championships and because he knows an overall triumph is beyond him because he does not race the speed events.

Tomba believes he will be too old by the time the next championships come around in 1997.

His three gold and two silver medals at the Olympics have surpassed his mentor Gustavo Thoni, who won two slalom silver and a giant slalom gold in 1972 and 1976.

But Thoni won another six medals at the World Championships. Tomba won a giant slalom bronze medal at the 1987 Championships but has generally run into bad luck at this event. He was sick for most of the 1993 Championships in Japan where Norway's Kjetil Andre Aamodt won both slalom and giant slalom.

Aamodt's best result this season was second in a giant slalom at Val d'Isere in France in December when Tomba pulled out.

Romario quits Barcelona

BARCELONA (AFP) — Brazilian striker Romario has quit Barcelona and joined Flamengo, the Rio de Janeiro club's president Kleber Leite said here Monday.

Following negotiations with Barcelona vice president Joan Gaspart, Leite said a "verbal accord" had been struck between the two clubs and the financial package would be worked out over the next 48 hours.

Flamengo have agreed to sign Romario on a two-year contract for seven million dollars, according to club sources, one million more than they originally offered. The Brazilian World Cup star is on contract with the Spanish champions until 1996.

But Gaspart said there would be no confirmation from Barcelona until the money was on the table.

The Barcelona board were examining the offer and the vice president said: "Until I receive assurance that the money is in the bank I won't be making any official statement."

Leite said he hoped to have Romario on the plane for Rio "either Tuesday or Wednesday," adding: "The deal will be sealed in 48 hours when we have the financial guarantees."

After bringing the World Cup back to Brazil from the United States last summer, Romario has been unsettled at the Spanish champions, complaining of stress and scoring only four league goals this season.

Romario, 29, born in Rio, made an immediate impact after joining Barcelona last season from



Brazil's Romario

PSV Eindhoven, whom he helped to score three Dutch championships.

He was top scorer in Spain with 30 goals in his first year but arrived back from Brazil a month late at the start of this season, angering coach Johan Cruyff who fined him heavily.

He left his family behind in Rio and has been linked with his old club Vasco da Gama, where he made his professional debut in 1985, and Flamengo, after repeatedly saying he wanted to return to Brazil.

Leite said Romario's problem was of a man "who wants to return after eight years away from home."

His decline in form has apparently persuaded Cruyff he can do without the explosive talents of the Brazilian striker.

The weekend's 5-0 defeat at Real Madrid was the last straw for the Dutchman, who left Romario out of the starting line-up and brought

him on halfway through the game.

But the player who last year scored 10 goals in 10 games for Brazil, was largely ineffectual.

Cruyff said after the game: "I want the best from my players. If Romario is not happy here and want to go home, he no longer interests me."

Under the new accord, Romario is contracted to play Flamengo until June 1996, date of the expiry of his Barcelona contract.

Wihdat, Kufroum score vital wins

AMMAN (J.T.) — Al Wihdat Tuesday scored a vital 1-0 victory over Al Hussein to keep the lead in the first division soccer

championship.

In another match, Kufroum defeated Al Arabi 1-0 while Al Faisali crushed

Shabab Al Hussein 3-0. (See details and overall standings in Thursday's round-up).

Back to boom boom for Becker

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Boris Becker has reverted to basics in an effort to recapture the fearsome form which netted him five grand slam titles between 1985 and 1991.

Becker, here to play in the Kooyong Classic as a warm-up for next week's Australian Open, has been fine-tuning his attacking game.

"Of course I have a few areas in my game which are not as strong as others so we are working on that, but mainly I'm going back to my kind of tennis which is power tennis — taking the ball early and coming to the net often," the German said Tuesday.

"We're trying to make that better, make it more effective."

"It has a lot to do with your general approach to the game. At 27 year old I can hardly change any more strokes."

Becker, triple Wimbledon and U.S. and Australian Open champion, had a resurgent 1994, climbing to world number three after drifting to number 11 after the birth of his son in 1993.

He hit back last year with title wins in Milan, Los Angeles, New Haven and Stockholm and said tennis was now high again on his priority list.

"I changed many things in 1993... manager and coach, then in the beginning of '94 with the baby being born and healthy, I could concentrate again on tennis. Therefore I played much better and had a successful year."

"But I'm surprised when people say I had a bad year in '93. I finished the year number 11 or so which is quite good."

The 1991 Australian Open champion said this year's event was wide open with a number of players in good form and world number one Pete Sampras' grip at the top loosening marginally.

"It's the first tournament for everyone," Becker said. "Apart from one or two players in the top 10, nobody has played a tournament, so I think you have many people here who have a good chance."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSH
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THE COUNT IS KING

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ A 5
♥ Q 8 5
♦ 10 6 2
♣ 7 6 3 2

EAST
♠ J 10 8 2
♥ 3
♦ A K J 8
♣ Q 9 7 5 4 3

SOUTH
♠ K 8 4
♥ A 9 8 7 4
♦ Void
♣ A K 8 4

The bidding:
South West North East
1♥ Pass 2♥ Pass
2♠ Pass 4♥ Pass
Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

Be prepared, the Scouts' motto, also could serve as the rallying cry of the bridge experts. Murphy's Law (if something can go wrong, it will) is another sobering influence at the bridge table.

South had almost enough to bid game, once hearts had been raised. After a somewhat more cautious trial bid in spades, North had the right

cards to accept the invitation. When this hand was played in an international pair event, most South players wasted no time in going down. Those declarer ruffed the opening diamond lead in hand and cashed the king and queen of trumps. Once East showed out on the second round, the contract was doomed as long as the defense didn't get careless. Try it for yourselves.

Among the few declarers to land the contract was Taiwan internationalist M.F. Tai. He ruffed the opening lead, but instead of touching trumps, cashed the ace and king of clubs first. When both went through, 10 tricks could almost be guaranteed. There were seven tricks in high cards and two more diamonds could be ruffed in the closed hand.

After cashing the king and ace of spades, declarer ruffed a diamond. A trump to the queen was the entry for the third diamond ruff and there were still the ace and king of trumps to complete a somewhat unusual partial dummy reversal. The technique delivered the goods, even though a defender held one trump more than the table.

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IAEA has no evidence of nuclear arms in Iran

VIENNA (Agencies) — The United Nations nuclear agency said on Tuesday it had no evidence from its regular inspections of Iran that the country was building nuclear weapons.

David Kyd, spokesman of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said the Vienna-based agency had found nothing to support claims made by U.S. and Israeli leaders on Monday that Iran could build a nuclear bomb within seven to 15 years.

"We inspect Iran on a quarterly basis and we have found nothing indicative of a programme other than for peaceful purposes," Mr. Kyd told Reuters.

"We have found the Iranians in compliance with their obligations to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)," he added.

But he said the IAEA "doesn't give Iran a clean bill of health any more than any other country."

U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said on Monday they believed Iran could build a nuclear bomb within seven to 15 years.

IAEA officials have said the agency was aware of various intelligence estimates that Iran could have nuclear weapons within even five years, but said they had no evidence that would support those predictions.

A senior Iranian official meanwhile Tuesday dismissed U.S. concern about Iran's atomic potential as evidence of pro-Israeli bias and reiterated that Iran opposed the presence of nuclear weapons in the Gulf.

Iranian First Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Hashemi said during a visit to Kuwait that if Washington was concerned about dealing fairly with the region it should force its ally Israel to open its arsenal to international nuclear inspection.

"We have always declared that we are against the presence of a nuclear, biological or chemical weapon or any weapon of mass destruction in the region," he told Reuters when asked about reports that Iran might develop its own nuclear weapons.

"If America had any credibility... it must force or oblige Israel to open its borders for international search by the nuclear energy agency (IAEA)," Mr. Hashemi said.

"The Americans know that these aims and subjects fall under a selective policy... thus, American credibility in this region has fallen, and the people of the world know the Americans' behaviour," he added.

Mr. Perry said Monday Washington was working with republics of the former Soviet Union to ensure they did not transfer nuclear weapons or technology to the Islamic republic.

Israel is widely believed to have nuclear weapons but has consistently refused to confirm or deny their possession.

Egyptian Foreign Minister

Amr Musa has said Israel was endangering Middle East peace by stockpiling nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction.

"Peace in the Middle East is under threat because Israel continues to accumulate weapons of total destruction... Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal the extent of which no one knows," Mr. Musa told parliament late on Monday.

"The world must be told what is going on in this field so that it realizes the extent of the danger threatening the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction," he added.

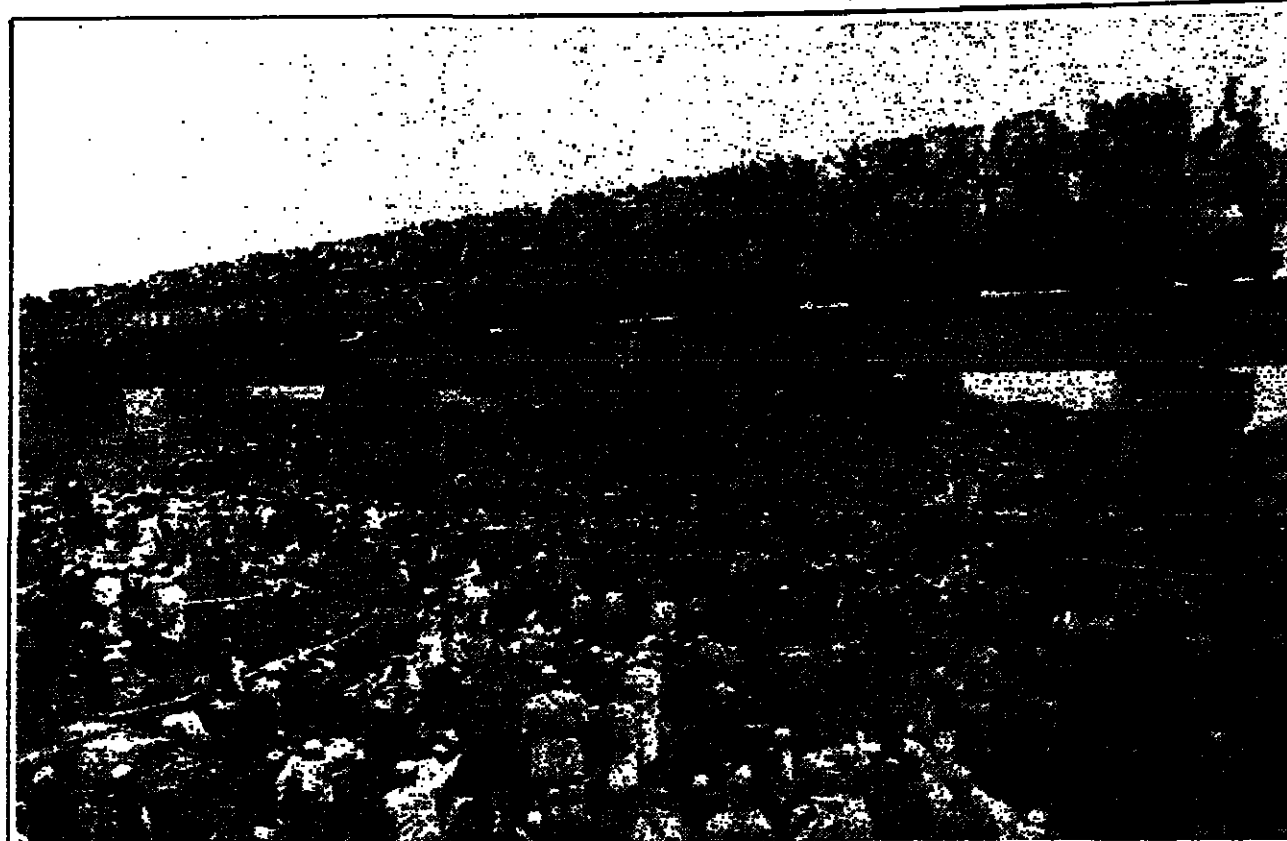
Egypt, the first Arab country to make peace with Israel, has proposed making the Middle East a region free of all nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

But Israel, arguing that some Middle East states are still hostile, has not opened its nuclear programme to international inspection.

The dispute has been gathering momentum as the United States lobbies Middle East states to vote for an extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in Geneva in April.

Mr. Perry, on a visit to Cairo last week, said the treaty was of worldwide importance.

"I told President (Hosni) Mubarak the U.S. regarded an extension of the treaty as important not just for the region but for the whole world and I will say the same thing to Israel," he told reporters.



CONGREGATION: An overcrowded train crosses a bridge carrying thousands of Muslim pilgrims to Tongi in Bangladesh. At least two million people converged on a muddy field near Tongi for the biggest Muslim gathering after the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (AFP photo)

Israeli jets raid Hizbollah position

TYRE, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli warplanes attacked a post of the Hizbollah group in South Lebanon on Tuesday after its guerrillas wounded two Israeli-allied militiamen, security sources said.

They said at least one rocket was fired at a Hizbollah (Party of God) position on Mita hill in Iqim Al Toufah, a ridge 40 kilometres south of Beirut used by the group to launch attacks on Israel's occupation zone in the south.

There was no immediate word on casualties in the air strike, the first into Lebanon this year.

A Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut confirmed the air raid. Earlier on Tuesday guerrillas attacked a series of posts of Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, wounding two militiamen, SLA sources said.

They said guerrillas fired mortar bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and machineguns at eight SLA posts in the Jezzine area in a finger of territory jutting north of Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon.

Hizbollah said in a statement its fighters at around midnight assaulted 11 Israeli army and SLA positions in the Jezzine area and in the border zone, inflicting several casualties.

In retaliation, Israel and SLA artillerymen fired about 150 shells near Mashghara and Ain Al Tineh villages, prompting many villagers to flee to safer areas, the sources added.

One of the SLA militiamen wounded in Tuesday's attack was reported to be in critical condition.

It was the second series of attacks in five days on that area of the zone, which is adjacent to the southern sector of the Bekaa Valley.

A spokesman for Hizbollah's armed wing in the town of Mashghara, in the southern sector of the Bekaa Valley, said guerrillas attacked SLA positions and "succeeded in occupying two of them in Kafriuna and Tumat Nih."

"Our combatants returned safely to their bases after briefly occupying the two positions," the spokesman said.

The SLA's Voice of the South radio said it pushed back the assault.

On Monday Hizbollah guerrillas killed an SLA militiaman and wounded an Israeli soldier in attacks which were followed by a six-hour gunbattle.

Lebanese police said meanwhile Israel was adopting guerrilla warfare tactics to fight the anti-Israeli resistance in Lebanon by launching ambushes north of its self-declared "security zone."

Patrols of 10 to 15 members are infiltrating outside the occupied zone and taking up positions in the adjacent valleys normally used by anti-Israeli fighters, a police spokesman said.

"They are staying there all night, waiting for the hope of trapping them."

The Israeli army had abandoned such methods after an incident in May 1993 when two of its patrols mistook each other for guerrillas and opened fire killing four and wounding three.

U.N. troops evacuate Mogadishu compound

MOGADISHU (AFP) — U.N. troops and staff retreated to the airport Tuesday from their sprawling compound inside Mogadishu, covered by helicopter gunships as they prepared to end the troubled two-year U.N. mission in Somalia.

Offshore, just over the horizon, a French warship stood guard, U.N. officials said.

Both the compound and the U.N.-controlled airport are vulnerable to stray gunfire as clans battle in the streets of south Mogadishu, but the area was relatively quiet Tuesday with only the usual rattle of occasional small-arms fire.

Fighting between rival Somali militias has surged as the U.N. operation winds down towards a final pullout date of March 31, with close to 200 people being killed and some 700 wounded since early December.

Many U.N. soldiers expect the warring clans to fight for control of the U.N. compound, the airport and the seaport as the final troops leave protected by an international off-shore force.

At the airport — living in tents and quarters made from shipping containers tucked behind sandhills — the troops

and some 350 U.N. civilian personnel will disperse to other parts of the world as the U.N. Operation in Somalia ends.

The move to the airport will be completed by the weekend, officials said, but a 950-strong security battalion of Pakistani troops will remain at the 33-hectare compound to deter looters as civilian contractors remove whatever is salvageable of the \$150 million worth of equipment still there.

Other Pakistani soldiers will stay at force headquarters just over the road. The 8,400 U.N. troops remaining in this lawless Horn of Africa country — mostly Pakistanis, Egyptians and Bangladeshis — will all be gone by the end of March, their pullout a result of the failure of Somalia's rival warlords to agree on a government of national unity.

The U.N. soldiers have already pulled back from the hinterland, all based now in this violent Indian Ocean city, hunkered down behind razor-wire.

The soldiers are still manning a few checkpoints in Mogadishu, but their presence does not deter the circulation of the pick-up truck battle-wagons.

French Muslims create group

PARIS (R) — Leaders of France's five million Muslims, acting with government encouragement, announced the creation on Tuesday of a body to handle the delicate relationship between their community and French officials.

Dati Boubakeur, imam of the main Paris mosque who will head the group, said it was called the Representative Council of Muslims in France (CRMF).

Mr. Boubakeur and other traditionalist Muslim leaders spoke at a news conference presided by Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, who has long pressed France's Muslims to create such a group as a barrier to Islamic fundamentalism.

"We wish to serve our community and French society since Islam is now the second largest religion in France. With this new organisation, we will now have the same status as other religious in the country," Mr. Boubakeur said.

Mr. Pasqua, who has carried out crackdowns in the past year against suspected fundamentalists linked to Islamic underground groups in Algeria, said France would speak only with the CRMF from now on when dealing with Muslim issues.

He broadly hinted at government financial backing for the group since most Muslims in France are poor immigrants from north or West Africa.

Mr. Pasqua and Mr. Boubakeur insisted the new body represented virtually all Muslim organisations in France with the notable exception of the fundamentalist-leaning National Federation of Muslims in France.

They acknowledged, however, that most Muslims in France were not members of any groups. Hundreds of thousands of unemployed youths are outside organised structures and Mr. Pasqua fears they are the ones likely to be recruited by fundamentalists.

Recent opinion polls have showed between five and 10 per cent of Muslims in France sympathise with fundamentalist aims while the vast majority seek integration into society at large and are sometimes only nominally religious.

French authorities were locked last year in a struggle with fundamentalists seeking to encourage young Muslim girls to wear headscarves in the country's secular public schools against regulations.

Mr. Pasqua said Paris frowned on foreign governments offering funds to Muslim groups in France, as they have until now, but he recognised it was the duty of individual rich Muslims to help brethren abroad.

Rich Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, have paid in the past to build mosques and create religious schools in France, where the dominant religion is Roman Catholicism.

Mr. Pasqua's statement was understood to mean such funds would still be welcome if they came under the guise of individual private donations.

Charles' friend Camilla to divorce

LONDON (R) — Camilla Parker Bowles — the close friend of Prince Charles — and her cavalry officer husband are to divorce by mutual consent, lawyers for the couple said Tuesday.

"We have grown apart to such an extent that with the exception of our children and a lasting friendship, there is little of common interest between us and we have therefore decided to seek a divorce," a statement from the lawyers said. Solicitors Boodle Hatfield and Charles Russell said the couple had lived apart for two years and a decree nisi — a provisional order for divorce — would be granted this month. The announcement confirmed intense speculation that their 21-year marriage would not be able to withstand Camilla's long relationship with the heir to the throne.

Prince Charles, who separated from his wife Princess Diana two years ago, admitted last year he had committed adultery since his marriage broke down. He also said he was very close to Camilla, who has never spoken publicly of her relationship with the prince. Britain's tabloid Sun newspaper said Tuesday Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles, who stood by his wife when the publicity broke over the affair, was taking the step because he felt the "time was right to start a new life."

Most Britons want to halve cost of royalty

LONDON (R) — Most Britons want to halve the cost of the monarchy and think the number of royal palaces and staff should be reduced, a survey published Tuesday said.

The ICM royalty poll in the Guardian newspaper found that 53 per cent of Britons want the monarchy's payroll cost to the taxpayer, estimated at £50 million (\$77 million) a year, to be cut.

"The same percentage want the five royal palaces financed by the taxpayer... to be reduced to two," the newspaper said. "Slightly more — 54 per cent — want the royal yacht Britannia to be shared with business as a floating conference centre."

It added. The random poll of 1,003 adults also found that 56 per cent of the people questioned said the 750 palace staff that are paid by the taxpayer should be reduced by half. "Eighteen per cent want no public money to be paid to the royal family... 32 per cent want the royal yacht taken out of service and 15 per cent want no public money spent on palaces and staff," the newspaper added.

The findings support suggested plans by Britain's opposition Labour Party outlined by home affairs spokesman Jack Straw. He suggested sacking half of the country's royal highnesses and turning those who remained into a low-key Scandinavian-style monarchy.

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2 sentenced to death for Mahfouz attack

HUCKSTEP, Egypt (AFP) — A military court on Tuesday sentenced two Islamic militants to death for attempting to kill Egypt's Nobel Prize winning author Naguib Mahfouz.

The high military court at Huckstep base just north of Cairo sentenced to death Mohammad Naguib Mohammad, 21, for stabbing Mr. Mahfouz outside his Cairo home on Oct. 14 and Mohammad Khodier Al Mahalawi, 22, for spying on the author.

Eleven militants were also sentenced to hard labour for either participating in the attack or for other militant activities and three others were acquitted.

Following the verdicts Islamic militants chanted "prison or execution will not make us forsake Islam," and warned "Oh Jews, Mohammad's army will return."

Mr. Mahfouz, 83, who won the Nobel prize in 1988 and is the only Arab writer to have received the honour, spent 50 days in hospital mostly in intensive care following the attack.

He is an outspoken critic of the government and Islamic hardliners in a weekly newspaper column, and strongly supports Arab-Israeli peace moves.

Egyptians were outraged at the attack against one of the

country's most popular figures, a diminutive man with trademark dark glasses and a regular at Cairo cafes for chats about literature.

But militants have accused him of blasphemy and in 1989 threatened him for his book "The Children of Our District," in which he depicts God as a father and the prophets as his children. Muslim authorities banned the book.

The trial opened on Dec. 6 when the 16 defendants alleged they had been tortured during interrogation. The court gave life sentences of hard labour to Amr Mohammad Ibrahim, 24, who gave the knife to the assailant, and to Hussein Ali Bakr Awad, 20.

It also sentenced one militant to 15 years hard labour, two to seven years, one to five years and five to three years of hard labour. Three were acquitted, including the youngest defendant, a 17-year-old schoolboy.

Ibrahim visited Mahfouz's house on the eve of the attack, bearing a box of chocolates and dressed like someone from the Gulf to get close to the writer to kill him. But the author was out, his wife Ateyat Mahfouz said.

Ibrahim was wounded in the leg in a shoot-out during his arrest in a cafe in northern Cairo. A militant accused of



Naguib Mahfouz

being the brains behind the attack, Bassem Shahin, was killed in the gun-battle.

President Hosni Mubarak has charged military courts with trying Muslim militants as cases are generally tried quicker and there is no right to appeal.

"Every law in the world condemns military tribunals but Egypt insists on judging Islamists before these courts while pretending to respect human rights," said Ahmad Hosni, a computer operator in a Cairo firm, who was sentenced to three years.

Another defendant sentenced to three years was a retired Egyptian army officer, Mustafa Abdul Bahi, a court official said.

Medical student Yasser Abu Aita, 25, got seven years after police found explosives in his room on the campus of Cairo University.

Berlusconi demands reappointment as premier or immediate elections

ROME (AFP) — Outgoing Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi called Tuesday on President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to reappoint him as head of a new government or call immediate elections.

"We have called on the president of the republic to accept an attempt to form a new government led by Berlusconi because of the way the political situation is developing," the business tycoon-cum-politician said after meeting Mr. Scalfaro.

If Mr. Scalfaro declined reappointing him, the only solution to the current political impasse would be "immediate elections," Mr. Berlusconi added. The two men had also met Monday.

Mr. Berlusconi's ultimatum came a day after most political commentators forecast that Mr. Scalfaro would name a new head of government close to Mr. Berlusconi's own right-wing Forza Italia party.

Several key political figures, including Berlusconi allies, have supported such a solution.

Mr. Berlusconi resigned on Dec. 22 after the break-up of his four-party coalition, sparking the crisis put on hold last week when Mr. Scalfaro fell ill and was

forced to suspend meetings on resolving the stalemate.

The president, who has said he is against calling snap elections, is due to finish off meetings with all Italy's different political forces by Wednesday, and sources said he would probably name a new prime minister on Thursday.

Mr. Berlusconi's stance was endorsed earlier by Gianfranco Fini, leader of the neo-fascist National Alliance, one of four parties on the Berlusconi team before it collapsed last month.

"We will ask Scalfaro to allow us to create a new government directed by Silvio Berlusconi," Mr. Fini said. "If a second Berlusconi government is not possible, early elections are the only route possible."

If Mr. Scalfaro decides against dissolving the two chambers, "we will not support any government that does not reflect the vote" in the general elections last March that swept Mr. Berlusconi to power, Mr. Fini said.

He said Mr. Berlusconi made the demand to stay on at a meeting with Mr. Scalfaro that ran late into Monday night. The meeting "went badly," Mr. Berlusconi said.

Observers here had suggested Mr. Scalfaro might seek to appoint as premier Lamberto Dini, the treasury minister and a former general-director of the Italian central bank, or Mario Monti, European commissioner in charge of the internal market. Both men are seen as close to Forza Italia.

Mr. Dini is not a deputy and could be called upon to act in a caretaker capacity, much as was the case for Mr. Berlusconi's predecessor, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, a former governor of the Bank of Italy.

Mr. Ciampi, who spent a year in power, was chosen notably to help amend electoral rules which emerged from a reform of legislation in 1993.

Mr. Berlusconi has said he is opposed to such a choice, but observers suggest he might accept it once it is imposed by the president.

Mr. Dini would be backed in parliament by the left and centre parties, along with part of the Northern League.

Northern League leader Umberto Bossi, whose defection from government caused its collapse, Monday faxed all of his deputies to ask them where they stood on supporting him or Mr. Berlusconi.